Catholic Sermons

J. B. Bagshawe

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CATHOLIC SERMONS.

A SERIES ON FAITH AND MORALS.

WITHDRAWN

BY

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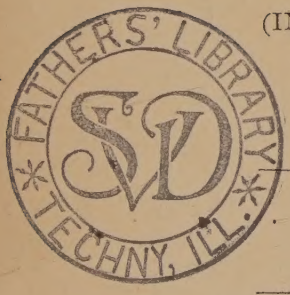

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SERMON XLII.

Hope.

"They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaias xl. 31).

I HAVE already had occasion, my dear brethren, to speak of the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, as being the worship of God—as being, that is, respectively, the worship of the intellect, of the desires, and of the affections.

I have treated already of the virtue of faith, but, before concluding the First Commandment, I must say something about hope and charity.

By the virtue of hope we make God our last end. I have spoken of this before, but it is so important that you will forgive my dwelling on it a little longer. To be a good Christian you must keep your last end before you, whatever may be the immediate object of your desires. You may have heard the story of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, which puts this thought of our real last end very strongly before us.

St. Francis was, at that time, a young man of great talents and high expectations. He had the world before him, and he was full of plans and aspirations. St. Ignatius listened with great sympathy to all his schemes for distinguishing himself, and, when he had finished, gently said to him: "And then what do you propose?" "If I succeed, as I hope to do, I shall, no doubt, be able to obtain a distinguished professorship, in which I think I shall gain a high reputation." "Yes, and then?" "Then there is scarcely any position to which I might not aspire." "Yes, certainly; and then?" "And then?—why, I must grow old and die."

This was the thought that converted St. Francis, and it is one you ought to have before your minds. When you have succeeded in your present plans to your heart's content, what next? and then?—and then? Then comes your *last* end, and that must be Almighty God—to see and enjoy Him for ever.

It is a terrible thing if a Christian ever allows himself to forget this end held out to him by God's goodness. It is an affront to Almighty God if you allow yourself to be so satisfied with the good

things of this life as not to care much for, or be much interested in, the eternal inheritance He offers to you. It was one of the reproaches which God made against His chosen people, that "they set at nought the desirable land" that He had promised (Ps. cv. 24); and it is a still greater reproach to Christians if, as St. Paul says, "they mind earthly things," so as to forget the true promised land.

"We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 14). The good things of this world—wealth, domestic happiness, learning, honour, the praise of our fellow-creatures—are only good as *means* by which at last we may arrive at the end of our creation.

The virtue of hope includes two things—desire and confidence.

First, we must desire heaven. We say every day, "Thy kingdom come." What a mockery it is to use these words if we do not keep up in our hearts any real desire of God's kingdom! The virtue of hope ought constantly to put before us the glories and beauties of that kingdom—"eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. Cor. ii. 9).

We cannot understand the glory and happiness of heaven. They are of their own nature beyond our comprehension, because they belong to a state of existence which we cannot even imagine to ourselves. God has been pleased, nevertheless, to give us glimpses into His kingdom in the Holy Scriptures—as if the veil which hid its glory were lifted for one moment to fill our hearts with admiration for the glory and riches of the Master we serve, and with a longing desire to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

We must not take the visible things described to us too literally, but remember they are but the representation, in words which we can understand, of things which are beyond us.

St. John describes the court of heaven in these words: "There was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne One sitting. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. And from the throne proceeded lightnings and voices and thunders: and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And in the sight of the throne was a sea of glass like to crystal: and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four living creatures full

of eyes . . . . and they rested not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when those living creatures gave glory and honour and benediction to Him that sitteth upon the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before Him, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power: because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and were created" (Apoc. iv. 2). "After this I saw a great multitude that no man could number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients and the four living creatures, and they fell down before the throne and adored God, saying: Amen, benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God, for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the ancients answered, and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? And I said to him: My Lord, thou knowest; and he said to me: These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of them, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Apoc. vii. 9).

Again, in another place, St. John gives us a beautiful glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem, as far as it can be represented to mortal senses: "And he showed me the holy city of Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and the light thereof was like to a precious stone: and the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone, but the city itself like to pure gold, like to clear glass, and the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones . . . . and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were, transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun nor moon to shine in it, for the

glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. xxi. 10).

Such, my dear brethren, is the sketch that the Holy Scripture gives us of the outward beauties and splendours of God's eternal kingdom; but these things are, after all, only the outside. Who can make us understand the *essential* happiness which is enjoyed by the blessed inhabitants of this city? Who can tell us of the deep, unchangeable peace which possesses them?—of the complete and unfailing joy with which they are filled? "Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 9). It is good for us, my dear brethren, to dwell on this true promised land which is before us, and to say with the Church: "O how glorious is the kingdom in which all the saints rejoice with Christ, and, clothed in white garments, follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth." This is the vision which a Christian ought to have before his mind's eye, or, at least, not very far from his thoughts: and his aspiration ought to be like that of the Jews in captivity. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten" (Ps. cxxxvi. 5). A desire of heaven as your last end necessarily includes a desire of those things by which you are to get to heaven. To say that you desire heaven and are making it your last end, and at the same time to care very little about the graces and favours of God by which you are to obtain heaven, is only a mockery. If you really want to gain any end, you are interested, and eager, and anxious about those things which lead you to it. So in spiritual things. If you care about heaven, you must also care about the grace of God, and have a great value for the sacraments and other things which God has provided to help you to your salvation. Every degree of grace we receive in this life may lead to a corresponding degree of glory and happiness in the kingdom of God. If we keep the glory and happiness of heaven before our eyes as we ought, we shall be very anxious for all God's graces, for the forgiveness of our sins, for our perfection in virtue, and the other things by which we are "to make our calling and election sure" (II. St. Peter i. 10). The words of the "Our Father," "Thy kingdom come," ought not only to be a prayer that we may ultimately gain heaven, but likewise a prayer for the perfection of that kingdom of God which is within us.

Hope, however, is not merely desire—it is also confidence. It is not merely a longing some day to reach heaven as our last end, but a confident trust that we can obtain it by God's help. Under all circumstances Christians are bound to have this confidence. Being confident of this very thing, "that He who hath

begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. i. 6). God has begun His good work in you all, and you must always trust in Him to carry on this work, and complete it to the salvation of your souls. Times of difficulty and despondency will arise, and temptations be hard to overcome; in spite of all this, your feeling must be that expressed by St. Paul when he says, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

No temptation is more dangerous than that of despondency. All men are subject to it in some degree, but some feel it more than others. Times will come when everything around you looks black; when difficulties and temptations seem, for the moment, to be too great to be conquered. This is the trial of the virtue of hope. If we give way to these feelings of despondency we are in great danger. This state of mind leads people to being reckless. They are tempted to say, "It is no use trying to be good, and it doesn't matter what I do." Against this temptation we must fight bravely.

You have to consider that such things are but a passing cloud after all, and the sunshine will come back. Nothing great was ever done without having to fight against discouragement.

Who are those who succeed in great enterprises? Those who will not be discouraged, but fight on in spite of difficulties. Look at all the great things ever accomplished. You will find almost invariably that they were carried through in spite of difficulties and obstacles which appeared to most people insurmountable. You constantly hear of holy men doing wonderful things with the smallest means against overwhelming opposition.

How did they succeed? Simply by perfect confidence in God, and by never allowing themselves to be discouraged. Take, for instance, the example of St. Vincent de Paul. He was a poor priest, with neither position nor money; and yet he succeeded in filling France with charitable institutions of every kind. Or, again, take St. Teresa. She was an unknown religious in a poor convent, and yet she contrived to carry out an immense work for religion in Spain. This teaches us the importance of a spirit of confidence and the necessity of never being cast down.

On the other hand, discouragement is the immediate forerunner of defeat. Take the finest army in the world, and allow it to be discouraged and hopeless. You are sure that it will very soon be defeated. All its valour will not be enough to protect it against the effects of despondency.

The same thing is true of our spiritual warfare. So long as we go on hopefully trusting in God and doing our best we are *never* defeated, but the moment we despond we are in danger.

We have a far greater ground of confidence than any one can reasonably have in temporal matters, because we have a distinct assurance that we *can* succeed, whatever the difficulties may be; no matter what external difficulties your position may present; no matter how grievous your internal trials; no matter even how often you have fallen before. In spite of all difficulties God's grace will make you virtuous, if only you choose to be so. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13).

You never can have trials half so terrible as those which assailed the martyrs in time of persecution. God helped them to bear these trials with constancy and joy, and He will help you also if you will trust in Him as they did.

The great sin against the virtue of hope is despair. This is the last crowning iniquity which a man can commit. This is an injury done to the infinite mercy of God, which always bids you hope, and by it a man formally gives up his last end. It is the one sin which makes all other sins irremediable. It was the despair of Judas that was his destruction. Even his treason might have been forgiven, but his despair cast him away for ever at the very moment when his Saviour was suffering for him.

Despair is especially a terrible sin in Christians. We know clearly all that our Lord has done and suffered for our souls; we know that our salvation is purchased, "not with corruptible gold and silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ." We know, moreover, that our Lord has promised *never* to abandon us, whatever our sins may have been; if, in spite of all this, we chose to cast away the hope of mercy and salvation, are we not inexcusable?

Christians do not often despair of their salvation, but in smaller things they frequently give way to a feeling very like it. For instance, a man has fallen many times into the same sin, or has several times tried in vain to break off an evil habit; then he says to himself: "It is no use trying to be any better; I have tried and failed, and I give it up." Or, again, he wants to gain some virtue for himself or to do some good for his neighbours; but the moment he is unsuccessful, or meets with a reverse, he gives up. What is this but despair in small things? It shows a want of that confidence which we ought to have in God's assistance.

There is another sin against the virtue of hope, and that is the sin of presumption. By this sin men commit an injury against the mercy of God in a different way. Presumption may

be described as an excess of hope—as hoping too much. This, however, is not a correct way of putting it. We can *never* hope too much, so long as we hope in the right way. Presumption, then, is rather hoping upon wrong grounds, or having a confidence which we ought *not* to feel.

Let me explain this. If you are very confident of success, but your confidence is placed, not upon the mercy and power of God, but upon your own exertions, your confidence is presumption, not hope. You sometimes find people very active in good works and confident of success; they are ready to undertake great enterprises, and no difficulty appears to frighten them. Perhaps they talk about the assistance of God, but what they *really* rely upon is their own activity and exertion. This is not confidence, but presumption. They do not think of the words of the Psalmist: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi. 1). In such cases it often happens that things go wrong, and difficulties arise, and then you find that those who began their good works by trusting to themselves are thrown into despair and give up their efforts. "Behold the man that made not God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches" (Ps. li. 9).

Those who are really relying upon God in what they undertake, are not to be dispirited by momentary failures and discouragements. It is one of the common faults of the age to trust too much to human means, and to active exertion, and to rely too little upon the help of God and the efficacy of prayer. This is shown in the external works that men undertake, and also in spiritual things.

People think that they can make progress in virtue and resist temptation by their own exertions. They do not say this in so many words, but they show it plainly enough by their acts. They do not hesitate to expose themselves to dangerous occasions, and hardly even think of praying earnestly to God to help them. In reality, they rely upon their own good resolutions, and their own strength, and have so good an opinion of themselves that they are full of confidence. What is this but presumption? Can we be surprised if God punishes men for this sort of presumptuous confidence by leaving them to find out their own weakness? "They that trust in the Lord are as Mount Sion" (Ps. cxxiv. 1). "Blessed are all those that trust in the Lord" (Ps. ii. 13). The Holy Scripture is full of such passages. It is part of the dependence and of the worship which we owe to our Creator that in all things we should place our trust in Him. In spiritual things particularly—which imme-

diately concern His favour—we should have an unbounded confidence, but a confidence resting upon His power and goodness, and not upon ourselves. If we transfer this confidence to ourselves we are sinning by presumption, and our confidence becomes an offence against the virtue of hope. Again, those are guilty of presumption, who, although they are trusting in God, are trusting without any warrant. They trust in God when they have no right to do so—that is, when He has given them no reason to hope, but, on the contrary, has told them that they may *not* hope. For example: when people put themselves into unnecessary dangers, trusting that God will bring them safe out of the fire, they are guilty of presumption. If they could not help the danger, but were thrown into it in spite of themselves, they would have a right to trust, because God has promised to "make with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13). On the other hand, God has never promised to protect us in dangers of our own seeking. On the contrary, the Holy Scripture tells us that "he that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27).

Our Lord went into the desert, and after He had fasted for forty days, He allowed Himself to be tempted. In the course of the temptation He gave an answer which is the best possible rebuke to those who are presumptuous. The tempter said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down, for it is written that He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest, perhaps, Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to Him, It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (St. Matt. iv. 6). What words can better describe the conduct of those who sin by presumption: they are tempting the Lord their God. If you give way to a rash confidence in your own strength, and neglect to seek for aid from God, what is that but tempting God? Again, if you "cast yourself down" by willingly putting yourself in the way of temptation, trusting to special graces which God has never promised to give, it is tempting God. If you neglect all the precautions that prudence requires of you, in the vain expectation that God will in some wonderful way preserve you from the consequences of your folly, you are not exercising the virtue of hope, but you are sinning against hope, and "tempting God."

The sin of presumption is committed in a more fatal way still by those who persist in hoping in God's mercy in defiance of God's own express words. A man, perhaps, is leading a wicked life and breaking all God's commandments; he goes on, day after day, adding sin to sin, and yet he will tell you that he

relies upon God's mercy. He chooses to form his idea of God's mercy and justice from his own fancy, and not from what God has pleased to tell us of Himself. The Almighty tells us that He will "render to every man according to his works," but *he* says God is too merciful to punish sinners. Our Lord tells us of Himself that He is a "hard master"—that is, one who will call His servants to a strict account, and "cast them into prison till they have paid the last farthing;" but sinners choose to think that these words mean nothing, and that they may disregard them under the pretence that they are trusting in God's mercy. This is not confidence, it is presumption, because it is hoping, not *in* the promises of God, but against them.

One very common and melancholy example of this presumption is the conduct of those who delay their repentance, because they trust that God will give them plenty of time to amend their lives. They do not mean to die in the state in which they now are. Conscience tells them that they are very far from ready to to present themselves before God's judgment-seat, but they trust to the future. "God is merciful," they say, and will give them time to repent before He calls them; and so they go on disregarding all the warnings that they receive. This, once more, is not trust in God—it is presumption. Our Lord has not only *not* promised to give them time for repentance, but He has distinctly warned them that He will *not* give them time. "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not at what hour your Lord will come" (St. Matt. xxiv. 42). "Have in mind, therefore, in what manner thou hast received and heard, and observe and do penance. If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee" (Apoc. iii. 3).

If then, my dear brethren, you sin because God is merciful, or delay your repentence, or neglect to use the means which God has given you to obtain pardon for your sins, and to secure your salvation, you are not trusting in God; but you are sinning against God's mercy by presumption. Attend, therefore, to the words of the Holy Scripture: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (Ecclus. v. 8).

And now, my dear brethren, if you wish to please God, you must be diligent in exercising the virtue of hope. You must have your last end always before your eyes, and never allow any earthly prospect, however brilliant it may be, to shut out the glorious vision of heaven. Let us, then, my dear brethren, "live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the

blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 12). "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him, the salvation of my countenance, and my God" (Ps. xlii. 5). "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped: never let me be confounded!" (Ps. xxx. 2).

SERMON XLIII.

Charity.

"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (I. Cor. xvi. 22).

WE have now come, my dear brethren, to the last and most perfect kind of worship which we can offer to our Creator—the worship of our hearts. Charity is the Queen of all virtues, and gives lustre and perfection to all the rest.

It is necessary to begin by explaining the exact meaning of charity, because the word is used in several senses. By charity people commonly mean giving alms to the poor or other good works of this sort. Again, the word is very often used to mean kindness and gentleness to our neighbours. Those who are kind and considerate in their manner of speaking about other people, and ready to make excuses for them, are called charitable. This common meaning is, however, only the *second* signification of the word.

The two precepts of charity are: "1st. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; 2nd. And thy neighbour as thyself." Charity, *first*, means the love of God; and, secondly, that love of our neighbours which necessarily comes from the love of God—since we cannot really love God without also loving His creatures for His sake.

The love of God and the love of our neighbour are necessarily connected, and form the branches of the same virtue. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God; that he who loveth God love also his brother" (I. St. John iv. 20). A true love for God implies, then, a love for our brethren, made to God's image. On the other hand, a love of our neighbour, which is not based on the love which we have for God, is not a Christian virtue at all, and ought not to be called charity.

Our Lord tells us that charity is the greatest and first commandment—and it is therefore absolutely essential for our salvation. St. Paul explains this to us in these burning words: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have

not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: and if I should have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing; and if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 1).

No good work that you can possibly do will avail if you do not give to God the love He requires. It is a common temptation with us all to value ourselves upon what we have done for God. Men presume upon their service; they have fought for the cause of God, and made sacrifices for religion. They have built churches and given alms; they come of a family that has always been faithful and loyal to the Catholic Church. Alas! this is just the spirit in which the Jews acted in our Lord's time: they were the children of Abraham, they were the heirs of the promise, they were zealous for the law; but St. John says: "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Matt. iii. 9). Almighty God has no need of us or of our work, and looks not to what we do, but to the affection of heart with which we do it. The Lord says to you: "Son, give me thy heart," and He will accept no offering in exchange for it. If you were to give your time and labour, and your money for the service of God, and for the good of religion, it would not be enough for your salvation, if you were not also trying to love God. "If I deliver my body to be burned, and give my goods to feed the poor," these are St. Paul's words.

Any service of God which is not founded, at least in the beginning of charity, is only a mockery. The very name of Christian implies that you are a lover of Christ; and therefore St. Paul may well apply to Christians the words I quoted above: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." The object of all the outward things we see in the Church is to lead us to love God better. All our prayers, and the sacraments we receive, are for the same end—to help us to love God better than we do.

We talk about saints and about holiness. What is it that makes saints?—and what makes one better than another? Charity is the measure of the saints. We read the lives of the saints, and marvel at all the wonderful things they did. They gave up all things to follow Christ, and spent their lives in toil and self-sacrifice, and their lives were illustrated by miracles which made them the admiration of men. All this, however, was

merely the outside—the mere indication of holiness, not holiness itself. What really made them saints was this, that they loved God more than others. Without this interior love all the great things they did would not have availed to make them saints. The man that loves God the best is the greatest saint. It does not matter whether he is a priest or a layman, whether he is a learned man or an ignorant labourer, whether he has done great works before men or has done nothing—he who has the purest, deepest, and most perfect love of God is the greatest saint. Oh, my dear brethren, why do we not all try to love God better, since it is the short and simple way to sanctity?

Nothing can be really good without charity; but *with* charity even the least thing becomes precious. "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of those little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (St. Matt. x. 42). What is it that gives excellence to this cup of cold water? It is the charity that accompanies it. It is so valuable because it is given for God's sake, "in the name of a disciple." It is so valuable because, although it is a little thing in itself, it is the act of a great interior virtue. Again, our Lord "saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites. And He said: Verily I say to you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God, but she of her want hath cast in all the living that she had" (St. Luke xxi. 1). The widow's donation was more precious than all the others, because it came from a greater love—a love strong enough to make her sacrifice "all the living that she had." Whatever you do, however small it may be in itself, if only you do it for God's sake, and with a great love of God, is precious before God, and deserving of a great reward. Charity not only gives a great value to little things, but it also covers over all other defects. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins" (I. St. Peter iv. 8).

This does not mean that you can go on in sin, and cover over your sin by charity, because the very idea of charity implies that you are trying to avoid sin. What it means is that charity is incompatible with sin. If you really love God your love will wash away all sin already committed, and will speedily overcome all the evil dispositions which are likely to lead you into sin for the future. A hot fire burns up everything, and in the same way a real burning love of God destroys past sins, present imperfections, and everything that can keep us away from God.

Christians commonly find it very hard to struggle against

the weakness and evil inclinations of nature. They are conscious of a great number of sins, imperfections, and shortcomings which it seems to them they cannot avoid; they have many bad habits and natural faults which they find it very hard to cure. The real remedy for all this is charity. If we could only fill our hearts with a great love of God all these impossibilities would disappear; the hard things would become easy, and the painful ones pleasant, "the crooked would be made straight, and the rough ways plain."

We must now consider what *sort* of love this charity must be. It must be, as we have said, "with our whole hearts"—that is, we must love God *before all things*. If you were to pretend to give God the *second* love—that is, if you professed to love Him, but put Him *after* some of His own creatures, your pretended love would not be charity, but it would be a mockery and an insult. But you will perhaps say, "How is it possible for me to give to Almighty God a greater love than that which I am compelled by my very nature to give to my wife and children, or to my parents and dearest friends? Is it not hard to require such a love as this? You are *not* required to give such a love as this. There are several sorts of love. The first is the love of *preference*. By this you deliberately, in your *will*, prefer one object to all others, and put it before all others, when they come into collision. Another love is the love of *benevolence*, by which you earnestly desire the good of another, and disinterestedly make the other's good your own. Besides this, there is the love of *tenderness*, in which your affections are sensibly touched, and by which you are sensibly drawn towards the object of your love.

We are absolutely bound to have for Almighty God the love of preference—that is, we must, with our deliberate will, prefer Him before all creatures. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (St. Matt. x. 37).

In these words our Lord insists upon this love of preference. If our love and duty towards God is opposed by even the nearest and tenderest feeling of affection we can have for creatures, we are bound to put this feeling on one side, and overcome it for God's sake; if we do not, we have no charity to God, but are preferring the creature to the Creator.

We are not, as I have said, required to love God with the tender feelings which we give to earthly loves—because this is too hard for men generally. The saints, however, were not contented by love of preference, but gave to God all the warmest and tenderest affections of their hearts. They gave to Him the

love of benevolence, and longed and thirsted for his glory—everything they did was for "the greater glory of God," and they made Him their friend, to supply to them, even here on earth, the place of father and mother and kindred. We cannot all do this, still we must remember that God says to each of us: "Son, give me thy heart"—and therefore we must not be satisfied unless we are giving to Him something of the tenderness and warmth which belong to earthly love, as well as that supreme preference which is absolutely required of us.

I said before that love meant nothing without obedience. We must be careful not to be deluded by *mere* feelings. It is a beautiful thing, and may be a most profitable thing also, to have a great tenderness of feeling, and to be filled with emotion; but all these feelings, even if you have the gift of tears, are not real love, if you do not mean to keep God's commandments. "For this is the charity of God if we keep His commandments" (I. St. John v. 3).

The way in which you keep God's commandments is the infallible test of real love. The man who is taking a great deal of pains to observe God's law, to avoid sin, and to do what is pleasing to God, however cold and dry his feelings may seem to be, is *really* the one who loves God; and, on the contrary, it is quite possible to have abundant good thoughts and emotions and very little real love.

There are, however, other tests of love which we may apply to ourselves. We say we love God. Let us ask what love does in us? Every strong feeling that occupies the mind is sure to produce some external effect. This is particularly true of such a feeling as love. You cannot love anything, or hate anything, without being greatly influenced, in some way or other, by these feelings. If, then, you have a real love of God, and really mean what you say every time you repeat the Act of Charity, your thoughts, words and actions will be greatly influenced by this love. It is impossible to love God and never to think about Him. "Where the treasure is, there also the heart is;" and if you have the love of which I have been speaking it is quite certain that you must think about God pretty often. Consider, then, what place God occupies in your thoughts—how often every day you think about Him—and you have a pretty good test of the reality of your love. If you find that God is almost banished from your thoughts, so that you scarcely ever think about Him from one end of the day to the other, you have reason to fear that you are wanting in the charity you ought to have, and you should not be satisfied till, by increasing the time given to prayer and mediation, you have "enlarged your heart,"

and compelled it to turn more earnestly to the great object of love.

Again, it is impossible to love God and be very indifferent about His interests, and everything that concerns Him. What are we to say, then, of those people who seem to be utterly indifferent about everything connected with religion? There are some, for instance, who seem to take no interest in the progress of religion. They hear of the struggles and trials of Catholics in other lands, or of the successes of missionaries in pagan countries, or of the building of churches and conversions to the faith in our own land, and they care nothing for all these things. There is a battle going on between good and evil. It has been carried on in every age, and rages with great violence in our own time. In every land men are fighting for the cause of God against infidelity, irreligion, and all the powers of the world. Is it possible for Christians to look on and be indifferent? Can they see all that is done without any strong feeling or interest in the matter? If so, can we reconcile this state of feeling—in ourselves or in others—with a real love for God? Does it not look as if our love was mere words?

In the same way we can judge ourselves fairly enough by our conversation. If we really care about anything we are sure to have something to say about it. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." We find this in the ordinary affairs of life. You see people in their conversation coming back again and again to the subjects which really fill their hearts. Those whose hearts are full of this world and its vanities are always talking about them. They are quite taken up by the temporal objects on which they have fixed their hearts, and can hardly be brought to hear of anything else. So it is with all those whose hearts are very full of anything. They must speak of it. An exile away from his country—prisoners separated from their friends—find themselves compelled to speak of the things they have at heart whenever they have the opportunity. If we really love God, and have our hearts fixed upon "those things that are above," it is quite certain we shall show our feeling in the same way.

We are not always to be talking about God and holy things, but still it is very suspicious if we never have a word to say. If people carefully avoid all conversation on religious subjects, and are impatient of it when it is introduced, how can we believe that they really love God? Love, then, if it is real, must have a place in our thoughts, and must, sometimes, at any rate, show itself in our conversation. More than that, it must show itself by what we do. "My little children," says St. John, "let us not

love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (I. St. John iii. 18). This is the way in which we test the regard which our neighbours have for us. We are not contented with mere professions, but we want friendship that is shown in action.

In the same way we can find out the value of the love we profess to have for Almighty God. What do we do for God? How much trouble do we take for His service? Are we prepared to make sacrifices of any kind for Him? Our Lord says: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (St. John xv. 13). It is not likely that the sacrifice of life will ever be asked of us, but we may very fairly test our love by asking ourselves what sacrifices we, in fact, make, and what we are willing to make for the love of God. If we find that we are doing very little, and that we are are not ready to do much, we cannot reasonably be quite satisfied that we have even the charity which is so essential for a Christian.

There is one more important test of the reality of love—perhaps the most important of all. This is the feeling we have about sin. If we have any real love for God we shall certainly have a corresponding hatred for His enemies—and sin is, we know, infinitely opposed to Almighty God. If, therefore, we love God we shall hate sin. "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other: or he will sustain the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (St. Matt. vi. 24). You observe that our Lord says "hate" the one if he loves the other. It is not sufficient merely to be calmly indifferent, and think that this state of mind is consistent with real love. The feelings of a Christian about sin ought to be that of hatred and of fear—no mere indifference. This is best described by the words of Holy Scripture, "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent: for if thou comest near them they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men" (Ecclus. xxi. 2).

This state of things is abundantly illustrated in the lives of the saints. Nothing strikes us more than the horror and hatred of sin which they displayed; not merely sin as threatening their own salvation, but sin in itself. Wherever it appeared—in themselves or in others—in friend or foe—they at once recognized it as a terrible and frightful enemy, with whom no terms could be made. Even the *name* of sin was odious to the saints, and it was impossible for them to come in contact with it without striving to destroy it.

What was the reason of this? What caused this hatred? The reason was that the love of God with them was so strong that it could not endure His enemy, and *must* hate it.

How very different is this from the feeling which animates a great many ordinary every-day Christians! They do not mean, perhaps, to commit sin, but they are very far from having a hatred for it. You see numbers who seem to pass their lives in trying to compromise—they wish to be friends with God, but at the same time to be at peace with His enemies. They pass their lives with sinners, and shut their eyes to their sins; their desire is not to "flee" from sin as from the face of a serpent, but to ignore it and say nothing about it. What does all this show? It is plain that they cannot have any great love for God—they cannot love Him with "all their strength and all their mind;" if they did they would never attempt to assume the kind of "benevolent neutrality" towards His enemies which they observe.

The great proof, then, my dear brethren, of a real love of God is to hate sin—to hate sin wherever we find it, without being respecters of persons. If you really love our Lord, you must, for His sake, always fight against His enemies, thinking "diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied fainting in your minds, for you have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 3).

These, then, are some of the signs by which we can test the reality of the love of God which we profess to have.

And now, my dear brethren, it is your great duty to light up the fire of this love in your hearts, and to keep it always burning. Why should you not love God? You have plenty of capacity for love. You are always loving something—always fixing your affections upon some of God's creatures, and often wasting a great deal of tenderness and generosity upon them. Why cannot you love that God from whom all their beauty and excellence came? What has the best of them to make you love it? Nothing but what was put into it by its Creator. Is it not sad to see men wasting all their affections upon creatures which never can satisfy their hearts, and yet not giving the least love to their Creator, who alone is really worthy of love?

But real charity must come from God. It is a fire which none but He can light up in the human heart. "I came to cast fire upon earth, and what do I desire but that it should be enkindled?" Our hearts can only be warmed by that fire which our Lord came to bring upon the earth. This fire He will light up within us if only we allow His grace to work in our hearts.

"The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5).

Charity, then, is the gift of God, but it is a gift He is ready to give to all. In Baptism He bestows upon us the *habit* of charity, which ought perpetually to increase in warmth during life. That "burning light" which was given to you at Baptism was the symbol of the love of God—the true light which you have to carry with you till "the Lord shall come to the nuptials." Your great duty is to keep up this light in your souls. You have to keep it up by using the means of grace which God gives you. Our Lord tells us of the ten virgins who had to watch with lamps in their hands. The one great duty of each was to provide the oil by which the lamp was to be kept burning. The lamps would certainly go out if they neglected to supply the oil. This is only too exact an illustration of what happens in the souls of Christians. God puts into their hands the lamp of divine charity, but they neglect to supply the oil needful for it by diligence in prayer and the use of the sacraments. The consequence is that the lamp of love within them is extinguished, and all that they may do without charity becomes "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Charity, indeed, may be compared to the light. When the light appears everything shines forth with whatever beauty it possesses; but the moment the light is gone everything becomes black, and the choicest gold and pearls cannot be distinguished from the poorest clay. So charity is not only beautiful in itself, but it gives to every other virtue an excellence and supernatural beauty which nothing can have without its divine light.

And now to conclude, my dear brethren: you must love if you really mean to be Christians. Nothing will take the place of love. All other excellencies and good qualities are little without love; if you love not you are lost. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."

Charity is the greatest of all virtues—greater than faith or than hope. "Now, there remain faith, hope, charity—these three; but the greater of these is charity" (I. Cor. xiii. 13). It is charity that must give excellence to all that you do; it is charity that must cover over all the faults and shortcomings of your life, for "charity covereth a multitude of sins." Try hard, then, to love God; try constantly to put Him before all things; try to expand and warm your heart to Him, and to make Him your friend; try to love Him better each day, and to love not "in word and tongue, but in deed and in effect." And you *can* love God since God Himself is the very source and fountain of

love, and He has given Himself to you for the very purpose of exciting your love and gaining your heart. He gave Himself to you once in His Incarnation and Passion, and He gives Himself to you again and again in the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. Our Lord says: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments" (Apoc. iii. 18). The fire-tried gold which can be obtained only from the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the virtue of Charity. If only you can gain and preserve this divine love you are, indeed, rich; everything will then be easy. "I have run in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. cxviii. 32), says the Psalmist. If only your heart is enlarged with the love of God, no trials or difficulties will be able to prevent you from arriving at the end of your being, which is "to see, love, and enjoy God for evermore;" "for I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38).

SERMON XLIV.

Oaths and Vows.

"Vow ye, and pay unto the Lord your God" (Ps. lxxv. 12).

I NOW come to treat of the Second Commandment. The special object of this Commandment is to secure the proper *reverence* due to Almighty God—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." This is a matter of great importance, since the very foundation of all religious feeling is reverence. If once you lose the feeling of reverence for God, and become careless and disrespectful of heart towards Him, you have very little religion left. For this reason the Holy Scripture says: "Give me not over to an irreverent and foolish mind" (Ecclus. xxiii. 6).

But this irreverent and foolish mind is almost certain to follow from carelessness of speech. If you allow yourself to speak slightingly and irreverently of God and holy things, to make free with them, and have them frequently in your mouth, you are sure to fall into the spirit of irreverence. The utterances of the tongue come from the heart, it is true, but very often the tongue carries the heart with it. Carelessness of tongue develops irreverence in the hearts of those who are guilty of it; and, moreover, it spreads irreverence amongst those who hear its utterances. We cannot, therefore, wonder that God has given to men the distinct commandment to honour His Holy Name.

There are two ways in which God's name may be "taken in vain," and I must speak of them separately. The first of these is by swearing unlawfully by the name of God, and under this comes all the sins which men commit by oaths and vows. The Catechism tells us that we are commanded by this commandment "to keep our lawful oaths and vows," and that it forbids "all false, rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths."

An oath means calling God to witness. St. John says: "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater" (I. St. John v. 9); and calling God to bear witness to the truth is clearly the most solemn possible way in which a man can confirm what he is saying. To do this "in vain"—that is, to do it falsely or foolishly—is the greatest possible disrespect. Listen to our Lord's words: "But I say to you not to swear at

all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God ; nor by earth, for it is His footstool ; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King : neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, yea, yea, nay, nay, and that which is over and above these is of evil " (St. Matt. v. 34). St. James enforces this lesson by saying : " But above all things, my brethen, swear not, neither by heaven nor by the earth, nor by any other oath.

" But let your speech be, yea, yea, nay, nay, that you fall not under judgment (St. James v. 12). These words point out the evil of bringing the name of God into ordinary affairs. " Let your *speech* be yea, yea." It is an affront to the Almighty to call upon him in trifling matters. Such a reference to God can only lawfully be made on some great emergency, or for the good of society. In these cases, however, it is quite lawful to call God to witness. To do so is, indeed, a solemn act of religion. When men refer to Almighty God on all great and important occasions, and make His presence and His truth the last court of appeal between one man and his fellow-men, they are recognizing Almighty God in a way which is quite suitable to every feeling of reverence and religion. The Psalmist says : " The King shall rejoice in God, and all that swear by Him shall be praised " (Ps. lxii. 12). During the Passion the High Priest addressed our Lord with the words : " I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God." And Jesus, although He had before been silent, at once replied to this adjuration—in acknowledgment, it would seem, of the appeal to the Most Holy Name of God.

As a general rule, the only lawful occasion for taking an oath is when it is required by some public authority. There are two sorts of oaths in common use at the present day—oaths of office and oaths for evidence. These we may call promissory and declaratory oaths. If a man is made a judge, or accepts any public office of trust and importance he is generally required to take an oath. For example, all members of Parliament, and those who have posts of authority under Government, have to take an oath of allegiance to the Queen, and an oath that they will conscientiously perform the duties of their office according to the law. These are promissory oaths. Those who take them make solemn promises, and call upon God to be surety for them that they will keep their word. They pledge, as it were, the truth of Almighty God to the performance of their promises.

The same sort of oath is taken by all those who are obliged to serve as jurymen. They promise to give their verdict conscientiously, according to the laws of the land, and according

to the evidence. If a man takes an oath of this sort, and then breaks it—that is, if he goes against his conscience, and against the laws he has promised to observe, it is clear that he is offering a great affront to Almighty God, whom he has called upon to witness his oath.

The most common form of oath, however, the one which we may be required any day to take, is a declaratory oath, or oath of evidence, in a court of justice. The form of this oath is that you call upon God to witness that you will speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." This means that you will not only tell the truth, but that you will not wilfully keep back any part of the story, or add anything untrue, to give a different character to the evidence you have been giving. The oath concludes with the words, "So help me, God"—that is, "May Almighty God help me if I speak the truth, and may He refuse His help if I do not." It is the custom, then, to kiss the Bible, to express that you are willing to rest your hopes of the blessed promises contained in that book on your truthfulness. No act can be more solemn or serious than this calling God to be a witness to your evidence.

It does not matter what is the exact *form* in which the oath is made—whether, for instance, you swear on the Bible, or swear on the cross, or take your oath in any other way. The essence of it is that you solemnly call upon your Creator, the God of truth, to bear witness to what you say. If you do this, and then speak untruly, that is, take a false oath, you are guilty of a very great crime. Perjury is *always* a mortal sin, if wilfully and deliberately committed. It is no use saying that it was only about a small matter. The sin of perjury does not depend upon the importance of the question at issue, but upon the insult offered to God by calling upon Him to be witness to a lie. It is no use to say that you meant well in what you did. Some people have a notion that it is no harm to say what is untrue, or to conceal the truth in a court of justice, to get some one out of trouble. This is a very great mistake. You have no right to commit such an offence against God—to offer Him such a public insult, either for your own advantage or that of your neighbours. Men have no right to do what is wrong and sinful, however great the good may be that they expect from it. We have to do our own duty conscientiously, and we must leave the consequences to Almighty God.

Perjury means taking a false oath: swearing to something which you do not *know* to be true. Besides this, there are many other ways in which God may be called upon "in vain." The Catechism speaks of rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths.

If you swear unjustly, or without consideration or necessity, it is taking God's name in vain. For example, we read in the Holy Scripture that "some of the Jews gathered together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul" (Acts xxiii. 12). This was a rash oath, because they had no certainty that they would be able to keep it—and, in fact, St. Paul escaped out of their hands.

This oath, however, was not only rash, but it was also unjust. These men swore to commit a great crime, and their oath, therefore, in itself, was wrong. What is to be done if a person swears to do something wrong? This is a question which sometimes arises, and about which people make false consciences for themselves. "I have sworn never to be reconciled to an enemy"—"never to speak to such and such a person again;" "I have sworn to be revenged for such an injury," and so forth. You must remember that no oath can *ever* oblige any one to do wrong—to do even the *smallest* wrong. If you have sworn to do wrong you were guilty of a sin by taking the oath; but you are *not* bound to keep it—or, rather, it would be another sin if you did. No obligation that can ever be laid upon any one can oblige him to commit even the smallest transgression against the law of God.

A not unfrequent example of this mistake at the present day is that people sometimes fancy they are "bound by oath" not to listen to arguments in favour of the Catholic religion—or not to embrace it. It is obvious that a hundred such oaths would simply go for nothing, and be without force. The moment a person felt that he had reasonable ground for suspecting that the Catholic Church was the true Church of God he would be bound to inquire; and, if his inquiries led him to conviction, he would be bound to embrace the Catholic faith. No possible obligation which a man could take upon himself could for a moment oblige him to shut his eyes to the light, or justify him for so doing.

The reverence we have for the Sacred Name of God ought, then—first, to keep us from ever taking any oath without real necessity; and, secondly, it ought to give us the highest idea of the sanctity and inviolability of the most solemn ceremony by which we call upon our Creator to bear witness to what we say. "A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house. And if he make it void, his sin shall be upon him; and if he dissemble it, he offendeth double: and if he swear in vain, he shall not be justified: for his house shall be filled with his punishment" (Ecclus. xxiii. 12).

The Second Commandment is also violated by breaking vows. A vow is a solemn promise made to God. It is necessary, however, to remark that every promise is not a vow. We are constantly promising things to Almighty God. When you go to confession, for instance, you make promises of amendment, and so forth. We can hardly fancy any very fervent prayer in which we do *not* promise something or other. Promises of this kind are not vows, because a vow is not only a promise, but a promise by which we take upon ourselves some *fresh obligation.* People sometimes, out of devotion, make vows to say certain prayers, or to give alms, or to adopt some particular state of life. When they do this they mean, of their own free will, to bind themselves to a duty—by an obligation which did not before exist. In promises of the *other* sort, which are so frequently made, people, no doubt, mean what they say, and intend to keep their promises, but they do *not* mean to bind themselves by any fresh tie, and therefore they do not make vows.

A vow, of its own nature, is a very high act of religion. You make an offering of some good act to Almighty God, and permanently, or for a fixed period, you give up your own will in the matter, and put it out of your own power to retreat.

We constantly find instances of vows in the Old Law, and they were recognized as a regular part of the worship of God. "Offer unto God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows unto the Most High" (Ps. xlix. 14). For example, we read of the Patriarch Jacob that he made a vow, saying: "If God shall be with me and keep me in the way by which I walk, and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and I shall return prosperously to my father's house: the Lord shall be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a title shall be called the house of God, and of all things thou shalt give me I will offer tithes to Thee" (Gen. xxviii. 20). Here we have an example of a vow. The Patriarch binds himself to do certain things if it shall please God to grant him the favours he is asking for.

The same has been the practice of the Christian Church, and it is a very common and reasonable thing to undertake such obligations—either out of gratitude for favours received, or in the hope of obtaining special graces from God.

Such things, however, must be undertaken with great caution. "If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it, for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him; but, whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it. And it is much better not to vow than after a vow not to perform the things promised" (Eccl. v. 3).

It is a very great disrespect to God and a serious sin to break a vow, and, therefore, people should never make vows, especially

vows intended to be binding for life, without taking advice on the subject.

It may happen, however, that a person has made a vow and then finds it very difficult to keep it; what is to be done? In such cases the right and necessary thing is to obtain a dispensation. If you had bound yourself to some one on earth, and found it hard to keep your promise, you would ask the person to whom you had made the promise to free you from it, or let you do something else instead. It is just the same thing with vows. The authorities of the Church stand, by God's appointment, in His place in such matters; and, if there is a reasonable ground for doing so, they are able to free you from the obligation of your promise to God.

There are two sorts of vows. These are called solemn vows and simple vows. Solemn vows are those taken by people who go into some religious order approved by the Church for this purpose. Simple vows are those which any one may take on his own responsibility.

The difference of solemnity between them seems to be that solemn vows are not only made to God, but are distinctly *accepted* by the Church in His name by a formal act; whereas simple vows are not publicly accepted. It is naturally much more difficult to obtain a dispensation from solemn vows than from simple ones. In treating of solemn vows I am naturally led on to speak of what is called the "religious state"—that is, the life of monks and nuns. Those who enter this state are called "religious" or "regulars"—not religious in the ordinary meaning of the word, but because they have undertaken to serve God according to some special rule or regulation of life. The essence of this state is that men and women choose the service of God for their special calling, and dedicate themselves, their time, and their lives exclusively to Him. Those who enter this state of life, more than any others, say, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my chalice; Thou art He that wilt restore my inheritance unto me" (Ps. xv. 5). Monks and nuns, generally speaking, consecrate themselves to God by vows—sometimes by solemn, and sometimes by simple vows. By these vows they are bound for life to what the Catechism calls the Evangelical Counsels. These are: Voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and entire obedience. To these is added the obligation to serve God according to the rules of some particular institute.

These vows are the most perfect and complete way in which a human being can consecrate himself to the service of his Creator. Those who make such vows give themselves up wholly to God,

and renounce everything, including their own will and liberty, so that they may truly say with the Apostles, "Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee" (St. Matt. xix. 27). This kind of life has always been one of the distinguishing marks of the Christian Church, and is its glory to the present day.

We find, in the Holy Scriptures, abundant examples of special dedication to the service of God. The prophets of the Old Law —Elias and Eliseus and many others—were men who had retired from the world, and dedicated themselves wholly to the service of God—the very patterns of a religious life. St. John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ, was one who went out into the desert "preaching the baptism of penance unto the remission of sins," and "John was clothed in camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey" (St. Mark i. 6); and of holy Anna, who was in the Temple to welcome our Lord at His presentation, we are told, "She was a widow until four score and four years: who departed not from the Temple, serving night and day" (St. Luke ii. 37). The example set by these holy men and women was speedily followed in the Christian Church.

Even before the times of persecution were finished the deserts were peopled with men who were contented to be poor and unknown and forgotten by this world, that they might dedicate themselves to Christ. They went out into the deserts with the same feeling with which the Apostle says, "But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 7).

Later on came the regular orders—the Benedictines, the Augustinians, and others—who filled Europe with their good deeds. When modern civilization was young, and most countries were nearly covered with impassable forests, these holy men went out to serve God in the wilderness, and became the founders of future towns and villages. In those days of war and trouble it was their convents that were the refuge of peace and learning. As ages went on fresh Orders arose, each one dedicating itself specially to some work for the glory of God and the good of mankind, particularly to what was needed in their own day; and so it has been down to our own time.

This was not the mere fancy of a day or an age, but is the characteristic of the Catholic Church. No matter how ruthlessly religious orders may have been crushed by worldly power

—no matter that their possessions have been seized and their members dispersed—the moment that peace is restored they spring up again like flowers in the early summer sunshine. The religious houses in England were plundered, and the inmates put to death in numbers at the English "Reformation;" and yet now we reckon our monasteries and convents by hundreds. Religious establishments were ruthlessly destroyed, a hundred years ago, at the French revolution in France, and yet they have increased so much that an infidel government in our own time has hard work to destroy them.

Now, the principles from which all these aspirations after a "religious" life spring are these—that the highest of all the aims and employments that men can have upon earth is to serve God, and that it is the greatest possible privilege for any one to dedicate himself exclusively to His service; that this service is enough to fill the mind and heart of any man, and is the "treasure hidden in the field," for which a man may well "sell all that he has;" and that the search after "perfection" is the noblest object to which any human being can aspire. "Be ye perfect," our Lord says, "as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

Our Lord Himself points out this kind of life in the Gospel. We are told that a young man came to Him and asked, "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" Our Lord said to him, If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments; but the young man went on and asked, "What is yet wanting to me? Jesus saith to him, If thou wilt be perfect go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor: and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me" (St. Matt. xix. 16). Here you have the perfection of the "religious" life put before you. "Sell what thou hast"—give up everything—and "come and follow Me."

Now, you may ask me, my dear brethren, what is the use of saying so much about a religious life? What our Lord said to this young man was clearly a special personal thing. He may, perhaps, give a particular vocation to individuals, but He clearly never meant it for mankind at large. That is quite true. You are certainly not all called upon "to leave all things and follow Christ," but still it is very useful, in a utilitarian age, to put before the minds of Christians that there *is* a higher vocation than the ordinary affairs of life, and that those who give their lives, and, like holy Anna, "depart not from the Temple, by fastings and prayers, serving night and day" (St. Luke ii. 37) are at least as well occupied as those who are busied about external works.

People sometimes, in these days, talk of a useless and wasted

life—as if any life could be better employed than one entirely given to God! In point of fact, those who adopt such a course of life are, generally speaking, more *directly* useful to their neighbours than others are; but if they did *nothing* but serve God by prayer, are their lives, therefore, wasted and useless? What can any creatures do more profitable than praise the God that made them? They are simply doing here upon earth the work which is the occupation and delight of the angels in heaven. "And they rested not, day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come" (Apoc. iv. 8).

To be useful to our fellow-creatures is, after all, a *secondary* end. *Why* should we do anything for them except for God's sake, and because it is His will? What claim has any creature on us for itself?

The world forgets and ignores the efficacy of prayer; but it is in reality none the less powerful for that, and those who are praying for their brethren are doing as great a work as those who are working for them. The monks, and nuns, and holy people who spend their lives in prayer, are, like Aaron, the high priest, who put incense into the censer, and, "standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plagne ceased" (Numb. xvi. 48).

I have dwelt on this subject because, although we are not all called to a "religious" life, all Catholics ought, at least, to have a great feeling of the grandeur, dignity and holiness of the vocation given to some—given to those who are called to spend their lives, and be consumed—if I may so—in the service of God, in doing that work of adoration and praise which *we* cannot adequately perform.

The use of these religious orders to us—even when they do no external duties—is to recall us from worldliness, and to give us a high standard of perfection. They show what heroic things nature, supported by God's grace, can accomplish..

We must not think of these thousands of monks and nuns as if they were separated from us. They are doing our work, and taking our places before the throne of God, and are, besides, closely bound to us by sympathy. Most religious orders have some society of Christians living in the world connected with them. Some of them have a "third order," expressly intended to include a large number of men and women engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, and to make them partakers of all the prayers and good works done by the religious. In the same way, the Scapular of Mount Carmel, which is worn by an immense number of Catholics, is an institution by which people are

affiliated to the Carmelite Order, and united in prayer and devotion with that great community.

It is a good thing for many Catholics to share, in this way, in the practices of a religious life, as far as their ordinary duties will allow; but, at least, we ought all to have a sympathy with those who have specially dedicated themselves to God's services.

In conclusion, if we want to understand the value of this life of devotion and contemplation, as compared with a life spent in active work, we have only to look to the example of Martha and Mary, and to listen to what our Lord says about them. "Now, it came to pass as they went that He entered into a certain town, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting, also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving; who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord, answering, said to her: Martha, Marth, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her" (St. Luke x. 38).

SERMON XLV.

Reverence.

"O Lord our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth" (Ps. viii. 2).

I NOW come to speak of another part of the Second Commandment. The name of God is profaned, or "taken in vain," as I have said, by unlawful oaths, or by disregard shown to the obligation of lawful oaths and vows. There is, however, another and still more common way of profaning God's Holy Name, and this is by bringing it in carelessly and disrespectfully in common conversation. The Catechism tells us that the Second Commandment forbids "blaspheming, cursing, and profane words."

Let me first speak about the serious nature of sins of the tongue. Our Lord says: "A good man, out of a good treasure, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (St. Matt. xii. 35). And, again: "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (St. Matt. v. 22).

These are the words which ought to bring home to us the importance of being guarded in our speech. People in general, however, are not so. They easily make excuses for bad language. "They mean nothing by it." "It is only a habit." "Their passion is very soon over, and they think no more about it." Such excuses you constantly hear from people who do not rightly understand that God will call them to a strict account for their language.

The use of speech is one of the greatest things that God has given to men; it is the particular thing that distinguishes the human race; and therefore it is clear that we shall be held responsible for its use. Some sins, of their own nature, cannot be committed very often; but sins of the tongue, when they become usual to a man, are almost unceasing. A person who has fallen into the habit of bad language is almost *always* sinning. Who can reckon up the number of times in the day that an habitual swearer offends Almighty God? The very

nature of the sin makes it frequent, and, as a rule, makes it injurious to others.

People say their anger is soon over, and the words they have said are soon forgotten. Yes; but the pain they have given and the scandal they have caused—are these soon over? It is very easy for them to forget what they have said, but their words have very likely wounded the hearts and disturbed the peace of others. The bitter words that have been spoken in a moment will, perhaps, rankle in the minds of some of the hearers, and be the cause of pain, and of sin, for years to come. It often happens that a few words spoken in haste, and without consideration, are the cause of quarrels that last for almost a life-time; and these words are, perhaps, never effaced from the memory of those who were injured by them. Again, a very few bad words, carelessly said, may easily be the cause of a lasting scandal and great injury to the soul of some one who hears them. Sins of bad language are very easily and frequently committed, and are generally the cause of injury or scandal to others. These two considerations, of frequency and of scandal, ought to be taken very seriously into account when we consider the importance of sins of the tongue.

St. James tells us of the evil effects of an unguarded tongue in very forcible language, which it will be well to quote. He says, "If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; he is able also with a bridle to lead about the whole body. For if we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. . . . . So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members which defileth the whole body. By it we bless God and the Father, and by it we curse men who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (St. James iii. 2). You see St. James here dwells upon three things. First, he mentions the effect which watchfulness over your tongue, or the want of it, produces on yourself; "he is able also with a bridle to lead about the whole body." Then he speaks of the mischief produced by hasty speech: "What a great wood it kindleth." And, lastly, the scandal which such language produces in the mouth of a Christian. It is scandalous that "out of the same mouth should proceed blessing and cursing."

The greatest of all sins of this sort—indeed, I may say of almost any sort—are words of blasphemy. Blasphemy means

reproach or insult directed against God Himself. If any one speaks against God, or against the attributes of God—against His goodness, or His mercy, or His justice—he is guilty of the sin of blasphemy. A blasphemer attacks God Himself. He is not contented with venting his passion upon men, but he turns against Almighty God and insults Him. Can any sin be more grievous?

In the Old Testament we are told how one of the Israelites had a quarrel with another man, and was guilty of blasphemy: "And when he had blasphemed the name, and had cursed it, he was brought to Moses . . . and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring forth the blasphemer without the camp; and let them that heard him put their hands upon his head; and let all the people stone him. And thou shalt speak to the children of Israel: The man that curseth his God shall bear his sin: and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die; all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger" (Lev. xxiv. 11).

This history gives us some idea of the enormity of the sin of a man "cursing his God," and speaking evil of the Lord that made him. It is to no purpose for any one to say that he did not think what he was saying, or that it was because he was in a passion, or that it was only a habit. Such pretexts will not be taken as excuses for the shocking irreverence and want of feeling which alone could have induced any one to use such words.

But people often use the name of God, not blasphemously, but only carelessly. They bring in the name of God on all occasions, as an emphasis, to give weight to their speech, or as an exclamation. You sometimes hear good people constantly using the name of God, not irreverently, but *lightly*. This is certainly a great disrespect, and must always be regarded as a fault. These people are so much blinded by habit, or by the usages of those around them, that the irreverence of their words does not strike them. As I have said, you sometimes hear religious people using the holy name of God very carelessly, and with very little reverence. If they only knew how profane and disrespectful such a usage appears to others, they would take great care to avoid it. It would be a good thing if such people had before their eyes the words of the Commandment: "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain" (Ex. xx. 7).

I will now say a few words about irreverent talk. There are many people who would never think of blaspheming God, or of taking His name irreverently, who are still very fond of

"irreverent talk." They will talk lightly about God, and lightly about religion. Sometimes this is in a grumbling way, as if they had a right to criticise, or find fault with God's Providence. People are apt to forget that we are not judges of God's ways. We have no right to judge, and we have no knowledge to enable us to judge, since, at best, we "see in a glass in a dark manner." It is an intolerable presumption for us to venture to find fault with any of God's dealings, for "My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaias lv. 8). There is a great irreverence in grumbling and complaining. "Neither do you murmur, as some of them murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer" (I. Cor. x. 10).

Another sort of irreverent talk is when people amuse themselves by rather profane jokes about holy things. They talk about religion, about the usages of the Church, about the saints and ministers of God, in a very free and easy way, as if they were always trying to find out something ludicrous. It is difficult to fall into this tone of mind without being led on to some real disrespect. It is almost impossible to be often joking about people and things connected with God's service without sometimes saying things which not only reflect upon particular people, but are also more or less disrespectful to Almighty God. It is much safer, therefore, in all light and jocose conversation, to keep clear, as far as possible, of things even remotely connected with God's worship.

There is another form of evil talk unfortunately only too common which is injurious both to God and to our neighbours. This is *cursing* or making use of "imprecations." People hardly realize the full meaning of the expressions they so commonly use. What their words really mean is to call down God's curse —God's condemnation—upon their neighbours, and this, perhaps, on some utterly trivial ground! It is difficult to conceive any greater affront to Almighty God than thus to call upon His most awful and terrible judgment on trifling, every-day occasions. "Thy judgments are a great abyss," says the Psalmist. What can be a more horrible profanity than to have these judgments constantly on your tongue?

If men only meant and realized what they actually say when they utter curses it would be too horrible to think of; but they do not. Generally speaking, people use such words out of habit, because they are accustomed to hear them. Making all allowance for this, however, my dear brethren, there still remains

a terrible amount of malevolence and revengeful feeling, which is displayed, and, moreover, *encouraged*, by the terrible words which men use.

If ever you are tempted, then, to use language of this sort —to use curses and imprecations against your brethren— remember you are doing two wrongs. You are offering an injury to God, whose office and judgment you are usurping; and an injury to your neighbour, by presuming to call down most terrible things upon him, and giving way to and encouraging the hatred and revenge and other evil passions of your own heart. To conclude this part of the subject, listen to what the Holy Scripture says about profane language: "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in this there are many falls. And let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth, and meddle not with the names of the saints, for thou shalt not escape free from them. For as a slave daily put to the question is never without a blue mark, so every one that sweareth and nameth shall not be wholly pure from sin" (Ecclus. xxiii. 9).

Under this same heading we must include every kind of evil talk—even though it does not immediately bring in the holy name of God.

St. Paul says: "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints; or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. v. 3). The Apostle here means to include all sorts of language injurious to your neighbours—all abusive words, calling names, insulting speeches, and all that may be called "low language." How little people think of this! They forget that the tongue is a very powerful weapon, and that, though its wounds are not seen, they often go very deep. Many a man goes through life using his tongue recklessly. He thinks very little, and cares very little, what he says or whom he hurts. Do you not think he will some day wake up to the knowledge of all the pain, and perhaps, misery and sin, which he has caused? God is the avenger of these things: "He that calleth his brother fool shall be in danger of hell fire." These are terrible words for those whose mouths are habitually full of abuse.

St. Paul speaks of "foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose." By these words he means all conversation tainted by impurity or profanity, or that can in any way offend the ears, or hurt the conscience, of our neighbour. This kind of foul and low conversation is, unfortunately, one of the crying evils of our own time and country. Wherever you go amongst some classes of society you hear it, and it is, therefore, very

necessary to guard against it. Conversation of this kind is painful and offensive to all good people; much more will it be abominable in the sight of God, who has declared that He will hold us accountable for every "idle word."

How comes it, let us ask, that religious people, and good people, sometimes fall into the habit of using such language —language which, the Apostle says, "Should not be so much as named amongst you"? They fall into this habit simply by keeping company in which this kind of conversation is common, without taking any pains to keep themselves free from it. When first they heard this sort of talk very likely they were offended and pained by it; but they said nothing; perhaps they were afraid or ashamed to show that they didn't like it. They did not keep out of the company, or take any precautions, so, of course, they fell into the same habit themselves. Again, children and young people fall into the habit of bad words, because their parents take no trouble to correct them, and, perhaps, actually set them the example by using bad language in their presence.

People say sometimes that they speak in this way only through habit—that they really do not mean anything by the words they utter, that they cannot help it, and so forth. Let us see, then, how far *habit* is an excuse. If you have accidentally fallen into a habit of something wrong, and then, when you notice how bad it is, you try to break yourself of it—the habit may be an excuse. It cannot be said to be your own fault, if you do a thing by habit, in spite of yourself.

But supposing that, when you notice what a habit you have got, you make *no* effort to break it off? That is quite a different case. Then it is your own fault that you remain in such a habit, and the wicked things that you say or do, through this habit, are, generally, quite your own fault. For example, supposing a man had picked up a habit of cursing and swearing, and using unbecoming language, and was really trying to overcome the habit—supposing he stopped himself every time that he caught himself at it, and recited a "Hail Mary" whenever he noticed that he had said a wicked word, by way of breaking himself of the practice—then you might fairly say that he was not responsible for most of the bad words he uttered, and, certainly, he would soon get rid of the habit altogether. If, however, he did nothing of the sort—if he simply said it was a great pity that he had contracted such a habit, and went on cursing and swearing, without any attempt at improvement—the habit would be no excuse at all.

This consideration ought to give us all a great fear of bad

habits. A habit has the effect of blinding your eyes to what you are doing, and leads you to do a great many things with very little consideration or remorse; but it is very seldom that your habit is any excuse for what you have done. It leads you to the edge of the precipice, but it does not break your fall.

It is not quite enough, however, to avoid irreverence of speech —you must also encourage a reverent and devout way of speaking. The Catechism says we are to "speak with reverence of God, and all holy persons and things." Nothing shows a reverent turn of mind more than a proper, becoming, and feeling way of speaking about Almighty God, and things connected with His worship You must, of course, avoid anything like affectation or mannerism in your way of speaking; but "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and if your feeling towards God is what it ought to be, it will make itself evident in your way of speaking of Him. Moreover, the very custom of reverent speech, the self-restraint which makes your language always careful and becoming, has a powerful effect on your own feelings, and will enable you to restrain and put down any hasty or unbecoming thought that may arise within you.

If you wish to be reverent in thought and in speech, lift up your mind to heaven, and see the profound reverence which reigns there; see how the mightiest of all the angels veil their faces before God's awful throne. "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth, for Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens" (Ps. viii. 2). "To Thee the angels, to Thee the heavens and all the powers, to Thee the cherubim and seraphim cry out without ceasing, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth. Full are the heavens and the earth of the majesty of Thy glory. Thee the glorious choir of the apostles, Thee the laudable company of the prophets, Thee the white-robed army of martyrs, doth praise." If the heavens and earth are full of the glory of this great God — if the mightiest of His servants approach Him with such profound reverence and awe, it is but a small thing that we men should be careful in our words and respectful in our manner when speaking of Him.

Whenever we mention the name of God it ought to be to us like a little prayer. His name ought to raise up our minds for one moment above the earth, and make us think of His presence. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being"— ought we not to think of this whenever we have occasion to speak of Him? "But Thou, O Lord, art amongst us, and Thy name is invoked over us: forsake us not" (Jer. xiv. 9). When we speak of this name which is invoked over us, ought we not

to remember Him whose protection alone can guard us from evil?

The Holy Scripture is full of exhortations to men to honour the holy name of God. "Praise the Lord, ye children; praise ye the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from henceforth now and for ever. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise" (Ps. cxii. 1). "Praise ye His name, for the Lord is sweet: His mercy endureth for ever, and His truth to generation of generation" (Ps. xcix. 4). "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 9). "The Lord is great in Sion, and high above all people. Let them give praise to Thy great name, for it is terrible and holy" (Ps. xcviii. 3). "Holy and terrible is His name: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx. 9).

I cannot conclude without speaking of the special reverence due to the holy name of Jesus. All Catholics are taught from their infancy to give a particular honour to this name, and to bow their heads whenever it is mentioned in their hearing. The Apostle says of our Lord Jesus, "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 8).

It is in the Incarnation that the Eternal God willed to be chiefly known, and specially honoured by men. God humbled Himself and became man, that He might be better known to His creatures. As they could not come to Him by reason of His infinite majesty, He "debased himself, taking the form of a servant," in order to pass over the infinite distance which separates Him from His own creation. It is in this "form of a servant," and under that sweet and holy name which He assumed when He took to Himself our nature, that God wills especially to be honoured and loved.

The name of Jesus, therefore, has the greatest possible claim on our reverence. It is the name which reminds us of the goodness of God, and of all that He has done for our salvation. The name of Jesus means Saviour, and it ought to be impossible for us to pronounce, or to hear the holy name, without some thought of our salvation, and of that Precious Blood which was shed for our salvation, for we are not "redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver . . . . but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (I. St. Peter i. 18).

Since we have such reasons for special devotion and tenderness to the holy name, it ought to give us great pain to hear it pronounced with levity or irreverence. Any Catholic who can bear to hear it spoken profanely must, indeed, be far gone on the road to destruction. What hope can there be to one who is indifferent to that "one name given to men under heaven whereby they can be saved"—to that name which brings before them the sacred mystery of the Incarnation and the Passion?

I will here quote to you a passage from the great saint and doctor of the Church, St. Bernard. It is rather long, but it is very beautiful, and will make a suitable ending to my sermon. He says: "It is not idly that the Holy Ghost likeneth the name of the Bridegroom to oil when He maketh the Bride say to the Bridegroom: Thy name is as oil poured forth. Oil, indeed, giveth light, meat, and unction. It feedeth fire, it nourisheth the flesh, it sootheth pain: it is light, food, and healing. Behold thus also is the name of the Bridegroom. To preach it, is to give light; to think it, is to feed the soul; to call on it, is to win grace and unction. Let us take it point by point. What, thinketh thou, hath made the light of faith so suddenly and so brightly to shine in the whole world, but the preaching of the name of Jesus? Is it not in the light of this name that God hath called us into His marvellous light, even that light wherewith we are being enlightened, and in His light seeing light, Paul saith truly of us: Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. This is the name which the Apostle was commanded to bear before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, the name which he bore as a light to enlighten His people, crying everywhere: The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light, let us walk honestly as in the day. He pointed out to all that candle set upon a candlestick, preaching in every place Jesus and Him crucified. How did that name shine forth and dazzle every eye that beheld it when it came like lightning out of the mouth of Peter, to give bodily strength to the feet of the lame man, and to clear the sight of many a blind soul? Cast he not fire when he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk?" The name of Jesus is not a name of light only, but it is meat also. Dost thou ever call it to mind, and remain unstrengthened? Is there anything like it to enrich the soul of him that thinketh of it? What is there like it to restore the fagged senses, to fortify strength, to give birth to good lives and pure affections? The soul is fed on husks if that whereon it feedeth lack seasoning with this salt. If thou writest, thou hast no meaning for me if I

read not of Jesus there. If thou preach or dispute, thou hast no meaning if I hear not of Jesus there. The mention of Jesus is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and gladness in the heart. It is our healing, too. Is any sorrowful among us? Let the thought of Jesus come into his heart, and spring into his mouth. Behold, when the day of that name beginneth to break, every cloud will flee away, and there will be a great calm. Doth any fall into sin? Doth any draw nigh to a hopeless death? And if he but call on the life-giving name of Jesus, will he not draw the breath of a new life again?" (St. Bernard, Sermon 15 on Cant).

SERMON XLVI.

Sunday.

"See that you keep My Sabbath: because it is a sign between Me and you in your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord, who sanctify you" (Exodus xxxi. 13).

I NOW come to a most important subject connected with the worship of God—the observance of Sunday. When we consider how much depends upon this we cannot, my dear brethren, be surprised that a special Commandment should have been given by God to enforce it.

The whole life of a man is influenced, in an extraordinary degree, by the way in which he observes Sunday. If he really sanctifies it, and, at any rate, *tries* to keep it holy, and means honestly to give it to God, it is very difficult for him to fall away altogether. However bad he may be in some things, at any rate he leaves himself an opportunity for thought and repentance; and, moreover, God will give him great graces in return for loyalty in His service. On the other hand, if he lets Sundays go by, without making any effort to give a portion of his life to God—if he allows those days on which all creation joins together to worship its Creator, to pass without any acknowledgment from him, he is in great danger of becoming hardened in his iniquity. The duty of keeping Sunday holy is, then, one of the vital points in a Christian's life. The obligation ought, therefore, to be very carefully explained to all Christians, and to be constantly brought to their attention.

In the first place, it has to be observed that the Sunday is *not* the Sabbath Day. You constantly hear it spoken of as such amongst Protestants, but this is clearly a mistake. The Sabbath Day was the *seventh* day of the week, whereas the Christian Sunday is the *first* day. It is not as if this were a mere accidental change, that had come about by some miscalculation. Then people might, perhaps, say that the exact day did not matter very much, so long as the spirit was observed. It was not an accidental change, but an intentional substitution made by the Apostles. We constantly read, in the Acts of the Apostles, how they met together for religious purposes on the *first* day of the week. For instance, St. Luke says: "On the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, being to depart on the morrow; and

he continued his speech until midnight" (Acts xx. 7). Here the first day of the week is mentioned as the regular day for their meeting.

This first day of the week was a distinct festival instituted by them in virtue of their Apostolic authority to commemorate our Lord's resurrection. The Jewish Sabbath was at that time observed most religiously, but the Apostles did *not* think it right to make that their religious feast; but allowed it to fall into disuse as soon as it could be respectfully abolished. The Jewish Sabbath, then, is gone, and the Sunday is a new day, appointed by a fresh ordinance, to commemorate a new law, and naturally to be observed in a new spirit.

The Third Commandment—"Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day"—is still binding in one sense. It is part of the natural law that some portion of our time should be set aside for God's service, and, so far, the Third Commandment must ever be binding. As to the *day* commanded, however, and the special regulations made for keeping it holy, it is just as much abolished as the Feast of the Passover, or any other Jewish solemnity.

The rules for observing Sunday must, therefore, be taken, not from the Jewish Law, but from the commandments and usages of the Christian Church. Let us now see what our Lord said of the Sabbath and its observance, and thus we shall be able to form a good notion of what was to be the spirit of the Christian Sunday.

He begins by asserting His own supreme power over the Sabbath Day—that power which, as I have said, was exercised afterwards by His Apostles. "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath also" (St. Matt. xii. 8). He then goes on to lay down the principle that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (St. Mark ii. 27); and He carried out this principle by the stern rebuke He administered to the Pharisees. "And the ruler of the synagogue, being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, answering, said to the multitude: Six days there are wherein you ought to work. On them, therefore, come and be healed: and not on the Sabbath Day. And the Lord, answering him, said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you on the Sabbath Day loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?" (St. Luke xiii. 14).

These words, and many others like them, are a sufficient rebuke to the fanatical and superstitious observance of Sunday

which is sometimes urged upon us. You will frequently hear people quote to you the regulations of the Jewish Law, whereas, as I have said, it is plain that these regulations are no longer in force, and that we must look for our rules, not to the Jewish synagogue, but to the Christian Church. It is a mistake to urge people to over rigidity, as the Pharisees did. If you make it a day of gloom instead of one of refreshment, you are acting against the spirit of the New Law, and sometimes imposing a heavy yoke and a grievous temptation upon others.

There is, however, *another* fault which is still more dangerous—and that is the fault of over laxity. It is better to err by too much zeal, than by carelessness and self-indulgence. We Catholics have some little temptation to fall into this fault, perhaps by way of opposition to the exaggerated views put forward. Those who are really lax in the observance of Sunday are guilty of a very serious and dangerous fault, and do a great deal of harm to religion by the scandal they give to their neighbours.

The first thing to consider is, what does the Church ordain for the sanctification of the Sunday? It forbids "all unnecessary servile work." Servile work means hard work—work in which the body alone, or the body chiefly, is employed. Mental work—that is, work in which the mind and body share pretty equally—is not forbidden. Thus you may read or write, but you may not dig, or labour in a manufactory. It is sometimes difficult to tell exactly what comes under the head of servile work; in these cases you must go by common usage. For instance, needlework of all kinds is considered servile work, although in many cases it certainly cannot be called hard work.

It is unlawful to do any servile work without real necessity. By "necessity" we mean the ordinary works of life which cannot be put off—needful household work and such things. Necessity also means works of charity. If you were engaged in nursing the sick and doing good, your labour would then be excused. Our Lord says: "It is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath Day" (St. Matt. xii. 12).

There is another kind of necessity, and that is the most difficult to determine. It sometimes happens, especially in these modern times, that some kinds of labour must go on, and those who are engaged in them must either work at them on Sundays or lose their means of earning a livelihood. Take an example. In some manufactures the fires are never let out and the work can never altogether be stopped, but some one must be always working. In cases like this—that is, where a man can *honestly* say that he would lose his means of supporting

himself, or suffer serious loss, if he refused to work on Sundays—he is allowed to do so. I use the word *honestly*, because there are a good many who make this a pretext—perhaps a pretext to themselves, that "they are obliged to work on Sundays." Yes, but if they cared about it, and were as anxious to get off work on that day, as they sometimes are when they want a holiday, would they be *obliged?* Workmen can pretty often get a good deal of their own way when they like, and manage to take a good many holidays. If you find that somehow they are always obliged to work on Sundays, although they can get holidays at other times, I am afraid they will not be held excused by Almighty God.

People very easily exaggerate to themselves the amount of loss they will suffer if they abstain from their ordinary work on Sundays. They are quite convinced that they will lose their employment and be ruined. In fact, however, we very often see that the most successful in their business are just those who are most conscientious in sanctifying Sunday. Those who have some trust in God, and are not afraid to risk *something* for Him, are not often the losers even in this world.

The Church insists very much upon the importance of Sunday rest. This rest is almost necessary for body and soul, and without it there is no hope of properly sanctifying the Sunday.

The next thing the Church commands us is that we shall hear Mass. This is the great thing that we have to do to keep Sunday holy. It is a duty which is binding upon Christians under pain of grievous sin. It is a mortal sin to neglect Mass without a sufficient cause, because it is a matter of strict obedience. The Church commands us in a most solemn way to hear Mass, and commands us for the most solemn reason—that is, that by so doing we may pay our debt of external homage to Almighty God, and also may provide for our own sanctification. If we *cannot* go to Mass—that is, if there is something which really prevents us—then we are excused, but nothing short of a physical or moral impossibility is an exemption.

If you were a long way off the church—for example, out at sea, or on a journey, or if you were ill in bed—you would be excused from assisting at Mass by *physical* inability. Again, if you were engaged in some occupation which could not be neglected, you would be excused, because it would be *morally* impossible for you to hear Mass. If, for instance, you were attending upon some one who was ill, or were doing some work which you could not give up without losing your situation and means of livelihood, you would then be dispensed. You must,

however, have some such distinct reason. People sometimes imagine that it is an excuse if they are disinclined to go. They have been put out and annoyed, or something has happened by which their minds have been distracted, and then you will hear them say: "I was in such dispositions that I couldn't attend to Mass, so I thought it better to stay away."

This sort of excuse shows a complete misunderstanding of the case. The question is not as to whether your state of mind is such as to render it easy to hear Mass well, but whether you have any sufficient ground of physical or moral impossibility to excuse you from obedience to a positive command. However "indisposed" a person may be mentally to attend to Mass, let him go and do his best, and at any rate he will have the merit of obedience.

Hearing Mass has been one of the great duties of Christians from the beginning. The early Christians, we are told, "were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread and of prayer;" and, again, "they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts ii. 42–46).

Then, as time went on, persecutions arose, and they were not able to assemble publicly for fear of prison and of death. Still, they must "persevere in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the breaking of bread," so they hid themselves in dark passages underground—the catacombs as they were called—and there they celebrated the Holy Mass on the tombs of the martyrs.

In our own country the fiercest persecution could never stop the Holy Sacrifice. It was forbidden by law, and the priest who celebrated, and the people who assisted, were liable to imprisonment and death. When a priest meant to say Mass he had to disguise himself, and hide like a thief, and scouts were posted around to give notice of the coming of any one likely to give information; and then the Mass was celebrated in some very retired place, in fear and trembling. It often happened that they were discovered, and the priest, in his vestments, and the congregation found hearing Mass, were all carried off to prison.

In spite of all these difficulties and dangers, the Catholics contrived somehow or other to hear Mass. When we think of the early Christians hearing Mass underground in the catacombs, or our English and Irish forefathers assembling in secret places, at the risk of their lives, to hear Mass, we ought, I think, to be a little ashamed of many of the excuses we make. How very easy the duty is for us, and yet how many neglect it.

I have now explained exactly what is enjoined on us by the laws of the Church. We are commanded to abstain from servile

work, and to hear Mass. I do not think, however, my dear brethren, that you ought to be satisfied by merely keeping to the letter of the command laid upon you.

If you are anxious for your own spiritual good you will carefully consider the *spirit* and intention of the Church's law. What, then, does the Church mean us to do? It is clearly meant that we should give to Almighty God a *good day's work*. All our time belongs to Him, and it is only reasonable that a fair proportion of it should be dedicated to His service—so we are to give one day in each week. A "good day's work" does not require that we should spend the day in prayer or religious duties. The great bulk of mankind are quite unable to spend any very long time in religious exercises, and it would be very painful for them to attempt it. On the other hand, "a day's" work doesn't mean half-an-hour. If you have heard Mass, for instance, in the morning, and then take the rest of the day for yourself, you are certainly *not* giving a fair day's work to God.

The spirit of the Church's law, then, is that you should habitually give a fair proportion of time—considering what you are *able* to do—to God's service—that is, either to attending the services of the Church, or to private spiritual reading, or some other distinctly religious work. The plain object of the law is that Sunday may be a day on which we may lay in a stock of piety for the week. On working days people generally have little time for serving God, or taking thought for their salvation. They are hurried on by the bustle of daily life, and they have very little time to think. On Sundays, however, our Lord seems to say to us, as He once said to His Apostles: "Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little" (St. Mark vi. 31). We are to rest a little in order to be face to face with Almighty God, and, in His presence, to refresh our souls and repair the injuries that the turmoil of worldly business has caused, so as to be ready to go to work again, full of the spirit of God.

The Sunday should be a day on which to renew our supply of good thoughts and devout feeling, of religious instruction and good intention. "Come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded" (Ps. xxxiii. 6). "O Lord, the hope of Israel: all that forsake Thee shall be confounded: they that shall depart from Thee shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living water" (Jer. xvii. 13). If you want light, grace, and strength you must, at short intervals, bring yourselves into the presence of God, and so "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. iv. 23).

Considering this, no way of spending the Sunday can be considered quite satisfactory which does not include some sort of private prayer, or meditation, or spiritual reading. It is all very well to assist at a great many church services and hear a great many sermons, but if you do all these things without any real recollection of mind, there is something still wanting to you.

It is clear that any work or amusement which is inconsistent with these ends is contrary to the spirit of the Church. If you spend your Sunday so as to do little or nothing for the good of your own soul, you are going against the object and intention of the Church's Commandment, even if you are not actually violating the letter of it. This is, unfortunately, a very common fault amongst Christians, and one which produces the worst possible results. A great many people think that they may make Sunday a day of sloth and idleness. They, perhaps, hear an early Mass, and then they waste all the rest of the day. They are active and diligent enough when they are working for themselves, but they grudge even a little exertion for God's service. It seems hard to them to be asked to go to Benediction, or hear a sermon, or read a good book; they are quite satisfied with having given half-an-hour to God, and then do not scruple to spend the rest of the day in useless gossip, or reading story-books, or in mere sleep and idleness.

Again, others make Sunday a day of dissipation. We will suppose that they have actually complied with what the Church requires; they have heard Mass, but what else do they do on the Sunday? They look out for the most exciting and dissipating amusement they can find. They, perhaps, give dinner parties, and entertain their friends, and succeed in making the Sunday the most noisy, bustling day in the week.

Many good people almost habitually spend their Sundays too much in this fashion; and yet we cannot doubt that such a line of conduct is quite opposed to the spirit of the Catholic Church. You cannot "serve God and mammon," and we may apply this principle to details. If you make Sunday a day of boisterous pleasure and mental dissipation, you cannot make it a day of service to God. It is no use to say that you have complied with what is actually commanded, and are breaking no distinct law. If you are making Sunday a day of dissipation, and violent amusement and excitement, you are not keeping it holy and dedicating it to the service of God, according to the spirit of the Church.

People who act in this way are, besides, apt to forget that they are spoiling the Sunday, not for themselves only, but for a great many others. The dissipation you begin spreads around,

and dozens of people are, perhaps, prevented from serving God as they ought to do. In a great house, for instance, when people entertain, and give dinner parties, and make Sunday a day of festivity, many of their dependents are prevented from serving God, and doing anything for their own souls by the dissipation of their employers. These employers are very often good people, and assist diligently at Mass themselves; but I am afraid they will be held responsible for the spiritual injury which they occasion to others.

The Catechism tells us that "we are commanded to rest from servile works, that we may have time and opportunity for prayer, for going to the sacraments, hearing instructions and reading good books."

People do not think enough of the duty of instruction and pious reading on Sunday, and yet these are very important. I think some short time given to pious and instructive reading is almost *essential* to a well-spent Sunday. The Church sets the example by having the Gospel and the Epistle read out to the people, to refresh their minds with the Word of God. It would be well if every one would dedicate some short time to reading a portion of the New Testament, or a meditation or sermon, or of the lives of the saints, or some other devout book.

It is important, moreover, that children should grow up with right ideas on this subject. It is foolish to make Sunday a day of painful restraint and dreariness to them; but it is also a great mistake to let them think that they have nothing to do but to hear Mass, and that they may read story-books all the rest of the day.

I must now say a word on the general question of the lawfulness of Sunday recreations. Sunday has two objects. It is to be a day for God's service, and after that a day of *rest*—a day on which body and mind are to enjoy the rest which man needs. But *rest* doesn't mean sitting still. If a man has to sit still for six days, it is not rest to sit still the seventh also. Real rest of body and mind implies the exercise and amusement which are wanted. It is perfectly lawful, therefore, to enjoy all reasonable recreation—that is, any recreation which does not prevent you from observing the spirit of the Commandment. If you spend your Sunday in reading novels, or in eating and drinking, and dissipation, it is plain that you are doing wrong; on the other hand, when you have given a fair proportion of your time to God and to your own soul, you may reasonably enjoy yourself.

You must take care, however, that you do not unreasonably interfere with others, either by preventing them from keeping Sunday holy, or by giving scandal. I think it a matter of great

importance to avoid shocking the religious feelings of others in this matter. It may sometimes be that their ideas are rather overstrained, and that they have foolish prejudices; it is, however, a fault on the right side to give a little too much to Almighty God, and a fault which we ought to respect. It is a great deal easier to teach people to be too lax than to be too strict, and it would be well if good people were always on their guard against giving their sanction to laxity, either by precept or example.

You find some people, however, who act on quite the opposite principle. They seem to think it rather a fine thing to shock the religious feelings of others, and go directly against all their prejudices, by doing all sorts of unusual things on Sunday. This certainly is not right. Even if you are sure that you are not erring yourself by over laxity—which is sometimes a little doubtful — why should you scandalize others who are really zealous for God's service? St. Paul says: "When you sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I scandalize my brother" (I. Cor. viii. 12).

Those who are careless and over-free in their amusements on Sunday are very apt to give scandal here in England. If their behaviour causes sin in other people, or turns people away from the Church of God, they will certainly be held responsible for it.

I must conclude by dwelling on the great advantage of keeping Sunday well, and the blessings that are sure to come from doing so. A careful observance of Sunday is the great external mark of your reverence for Almighty God; it is the formal worship of body and soul which you offer to Him before angels and men. This worship may be called, in a sense, the back bone of religion; if you do not give it, and give it regularly, your religion is not worth much.

It is also the special mark of obedience to the Church. Obedience, especially if given with some little temporal sacrifice, is sure to bring blessings with it. It is very sad to see how dreadfully afraid people are of risking even the smallest loss for the service of God; whereas we have plenty of examples, as I before said, to show that those who are not quite so timid do not lose much in the long run. If we were to look round London, for instance, I think we should find that those traders and business people who conscientiously abstain from work on Sundays are by no means the least successful. In the Old Law Almighty God made up to the Jews any temporal loss they might have suffered from the observance of the days kept holy,

by the blessings which He sent upon them and all that belonged to them; so He would do with us, if only we trusted Him a little more, and were not quite so careful of ourselves.

Give, then, my dear brethren, this one day to Almighty God cheerfully and lovingly; do not grudge the little trouble and self-denial which it may cost you, and God will reward you a hundredfold for all that you do for His sake. Teach your children to reverence the day set apart for God's service, and so you are securing to them the best means of persevering in virtue, and providing for them an efficacious remedy and means of returning to God if ever they should be led away by the violence of temptation. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.

Holy Mass.

"And behold, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing as it were slain" (Apoc. v. 6).

I HAVE been speaking, my dear brethren, about the duty of sanctifying Sunday. It remains for me to say something more in explanation of the Holy Mass, as this is the authorized way of keeping Sunday holy, and the special duty imposed on us by the Church for this purpose. It is the one special duty which the Church imposes upon us. There are, indeed, many other devotions and exercises of piety, which are left to our own discretion; but the Church *commands* us, as the strictest of duties, to assist at Mass, as the one thing of strict obligation. It is vain for those who have the opportunity of hearing Mass, and will not take the trouble to do so, to think that they can make up for their neglect in some other way. There are many who *cannot* always attend at Mass; they live, it may be, a long way off, or their health confines them to the house. In these cases you are not actually present, but you may join in spirit with the Masses which are said throughout the world, and so sanctify the Sunday very well. It is quite different with those who are away from Mass by their own carelessness, without any good reason.

You sometimes hear people talk of going to church in the afternoon, of going to Benediction or evening service, as if it came to nearly the same thing as going to Mass, so that they may substitute one for the other without any great harm. This idea, of course, comes simply from ignorance. No Vespers, or evening devotions, or Benediction will, in any degree, take the place of Mass to those who *might* hear Mass if they chose to do so.

The command to hear Mass is laid upon us in the strictest way. The Church commands us to hear Mass in God's name, and by virtue of that obedience which we owe to Him. The command is given to us as a matter of very great importance, and binds us under pain of mortal sin. Our Lord says to His Apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth Me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me" (St. Luke x. 16).

Let us consider the importance of the Holy Mass, and then we shall see why the Church makes so great a point of our attending to it, and is so very stern with all who neglect that duty. Our very nature tells us that we are bound to worship our Creator, and that this is the first of all our duties. Nature, however, tells us something more than this. It tells us that worship, to be complete, must be something more than mere words. Prayer and praise, the thoughts of the heart, and the words of the lips are not enough; there must be something higher. We must *offer* something to God, something of value sufficient, to be suitable to His dignity, something which shall adequately express our *homage*, submission, and dependence upon Him. In other words, nature points out that the highest kind of worship is that of *sacrifice*. A sacrifice means something offered to God, and dedicated to Him, and which is in some way *expended* in His service or poured out before Him in token of His being the Supreme Lord of all.

Mankind, from the beginning, have felt the need of this kind of worship, and have been striving perpetually to find adequate objects of sacrifice. The history of religion shows us how keenly men have ever felt that God must be worshipped by sacrifice, and that without it all homage is imperfect. This doctrine of sacrifice is either the direct teaching of our nature, or else the remains of the primitive tradition given to the human race, for we meet it everywhere. The ancient religions with which the world was covered had each its own forms of sacrifice, and the pagan worships of the present day have their forms. It does not matter whether you consult the cultivated and refined religions of Greece and Rome, or go to the most uncivilized barbarians of the present day. Everywhere you find the same idea—sacrifice to God. The Almighty requires a worship beyond mere words—he must be worshipped by sacrifice.

If we go back to the very beginning of the human race we find that men had hardly been driven out of paradise when sacrifice began. "And Abel was a shepherd and Cain a husbandman. And it came to pass, after many days, that Cain offered, of the fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat; and the Lord had respect to Abel and his offerings. But to Cain and his offerings He had no respect; and Cain was exceeding angry, and his countenance fell" (Gen. iv. 2). This is the account of the first solemn worship offered to God—the worship of sacrifice. Again, when Noah went out of the ark, after the deluge, his thanksgiving was of the same character. "And Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and, taking of all cattle and fowls that were

clean, offered holocausts upon the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour and said: 'I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man, for the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth: therefore I will no more destroy every living soul as I have done. All the days of the earth, seed time and harvest, heat and cold, summer and winter, night and day, shall not cease'" (Gen. viii. 20).

The idea of worshipping God by sacrifice was not a mere fancy of men. It was a conviction deeply rooted in their very nature, and formally confirmed by God. When God chose out one people for Himself, and gave them a distinct law and worship, He carried out, to the full, the primeval idea of the worship of sacrifice. He commanded that His people should offer to Him holocausts or whole-burnt offerings; sacrifice for sin and for ignorance; peace offerings and offerings of thanksgiving, and a vast number of other sacrifices.

But what, after all, could these sacrifices do? They were evidences of the desire of the human race to find something worthy to offer to Almighty God. They were the best that men had to offer, but in themselves they were utterly disproportioned to the majesty of Him whom they intended to honour. Almighty God, therefore, condescended to His creatures, and He Himself provided a sacrifice which alone could be worthy of Himself. "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me; holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then, said I, behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 5).

The sacrifices appointed by God in the Old Law were but types and figures of that one great sacrifice which He had been pleased to ordain for the human race—the sacrifice of His own Divine Son made man.

All the sacrifices of goats and of calves were types and figures of that one great sacrifice in which Jesus our Lord, "by His own blood, entered once into the Holies;" but they were not *mere* figures. The holocausts, the peace offerings, and daily sacrifice of the Old Law were meant for something more than merely figurative actions. They were *representations*, indeed, of Christ's sacrifice, but represented it in the sense of making it *present* to the people who assisted at them. By these sacrifices our Lord's Passion, which was then far off in the ages to come, was made present to them, so that they might use it as a real worship to God, and share in all its life-giving efficacy. It is for this reason that our Lord is called "the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. xiii. 8). He was slain from the beginning in a very true sense, because His Passion was made

perpetually present to the people of all ages in the sacrifices they offered, because His Precious Blood was continually being offered up in anticipation, and the merits purchased by His death shared amongst the people as the fruits of the sacrifices offered to God.

But now, my dear brethren, to come to the part of the subject which principally concerns us, we have to consider how this solemn worship of sacrifice is to be continued in our time. It is quite certain that God will never leave us without something to correspond to the sacrifices which made our Lord's Passion present to the people of old. The answer is very simple. The Sacrifice of the Mass is the one great sacrifice which takes the place of all that multitude of sacrifices ordained in the Old Law. It takes the place of these sacrifices, but carries out the end for which they were instituted in a far more perfect and complete manner. They were representations by which our Lord's sacrifice was made present, not in reality, but in *effect*; but *our* sacrifice is one which makes our Lord's Passion present in reality, as well as in effect. "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 26).

Our Lord suffered once, and once entered into the Holies; yet still He was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, because His death was to be in some way present from the beginning to the end. It was made present in figure and effect to all preceding generations by the sacrifices appointed for them by Almighty God, and is present to us by its mystical renewal in the Sacrifice of the Mass. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation, for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 11).

The Holy Mass is this sacrifice, this clean oblation which is offered up in every place. From the rising of the sun to its going down the Holy Sacrifice is perpetually offered. In every age since the time of the Apostles, in every nation under heaven, has this same sacrifice been offered to Almighty God.

The Mass, then, supplies the place of all the different kinds of sacrifice which were offered by the Jews, and it obtains for us, in a more perfect manner, all the ends and objects for which a sacrifice is offered. The Catechism says: "The Sacrifice of the Mass is offered for four ends—first, to give supreme honour and glory to God; secondly, to thank Him for all His benefits; thirdly, to obtain pardon for all our sins; and, fourthly, to obtain all other graces and blessings through Jesus Christ."

We have to consider the Mass, however, not only as a sacrifice. It is also the special act by which you take part in the Passion of our Lord—that is, you show your sympathy with Jesus suffering. In it you claim your place at the foot of His cross, and your share in His Passion ; you thank Him for all that He has done for you. To use the words already quoted, you "show forth the death of the Lord until He come" every time that you devoutly assist at the Most Holy Mass.

The Mass is also the grand act of communion in which all parts of the Church are united together. St. John describes to us "the Lamb standing as it were slain," and the hosts of heaven gathered together to worship. 'Standing as it were slain," because though He was sacrificed once, and all the pain and ignominy had passed away, yet that sacrifice was continually renewed, and perpetuated for ever in the glory of heaven. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the ancients ; and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice : The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them ; I heard all saying : To Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction and honour, and glory, and power for ever and ever" (Apoc. v. 11).

In this great hymn of praise the Church on earth joins by the celebration of Holy Mass. The Lamb is then in the midst of us, "standing as it were slain." His Passion and death are again celebrated, and He once more offers Himself as our victim in a mystical manner ; and the Church militant on earth unites itself with the glorified Church in heaven.

I must now go on, my dear brethren, to consider more practically the duty of hearing Mass. We speak of attending Mass, assisting at Mass, hearing Mass, but what is it that we exactly mean by these terms? We do not mean mere looking on. Sometimes you meet people who hardly realize that they have anything much else to do when they go to Mass beyond looking on whilst the priest celebrates. They do not seem to understand the share that they have in that celebration. It is not a mere form of prayer in which they are to join. It is, indeed, a beautiful thing for Christians to join in prayer, but the Mass is a something much higher. You go to Mass to take part yourself in a great action, the greatest that can be performed on earth. You go to unite with the priest in offering a sacrifice to

God, and not only to unite with the priest whom you see, but with our Lord Jesus Christ, "the great High Priest of the good things to come."

It is our Lord who is the great and the true Priest, who offers Himself upon the altar. As it was He who sacrificed Himself by His own will on Mount Calvary, "who, by the Holy Ghost, offered Himself unspotted unto God," so He it is who, by the hands of His earthly priest, continues to offer Himself in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and it is with Him you are invited to join. The priest, as he celebrates Mass, treats all those present at the Mass as sharing in his act, and offering up sacrifice in union with him. "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty"—these are the words which the priest addresses to the people just before the most solemn part of the Mass begins. Again, during the Canon of the Mass he say: "Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer, or *who offer* to Thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves and all that belong them, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their salvation and safety, and render their vows to Thee, the eternal, living and true God."

There are two things which we want in order to assist worthily at the Mass. The first is *intention.* When you go to Mass you must intend to hear Mass, otherwise your being present is no human action at all. You will hear Mass well in proportion to the earnestness of your intention. If you think very little of what you are going to do, and allow yourself to be led a good deal by routine, you may have, it is true, an intention, strictly speaking, but it is a very feeble intention.

An earnest intention requires earnest thought. If you have been thinking of the Mass—of the meaning of it and its objects —then you are sure to have a strong intention in hearing it. Then you will really intend, and intend with all your heart, not only to "hear Mass," but, more distinctly, to offer to God a sacrifice of praise and homage, to approach His throne and offer gifts before His altar. The Psalmist says: "Come in before His presence with exceeding great joy. Know ye that the Lord He is God: He made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Go ye into His gates with praise, into His courts with hymns, and give glory to Him" (Ps. xcix. 2). This is the sort of intention which Christians should have in their minds when they hear Mass.

You must have *some* kind of intention or you would not hear Mass so as to comply with the obligations. For example, a person merely present in the church for some other purpose

would not necessarily hear Mass, though he might be present whilst it was celebrated. This intention need not, however, be actually present to your mind. It is not *necessary* to think beforehand what you are going for, and what is your object in going. The necessary intention is sufficiently or *virtually* contained in the mere fact of going to church, and, therefore, you never need have any scruple as to whether you had an intention sufficient to fulfil the obligation.

As a help to hearing Mass devoutly, however, nothing is more useful than the habit of forming to yourself a distinct intention before you begin. "I am going to hear Mass, to join in offering the great sacrifice to Almighty God, to associate myself with the Passion of Christ, and to obtain all the graces I want for myself and others, and especially such and such particular ones."

I have now to consider the other condition requisite for hearing Mass. It is not enough to *intend* to hear it, but you must apply your mind to doing so; that is, you must have the necessary *attention*. If you did not endeavour, in any way, to attend to what you were doing, so that your mind and heart were entirely absent, you would be very far, indeed, from honouring or worshipping God. You would deserve the reproach that Almighty God made to the Jews: "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (St. Matt. xv. 8).

When people complain of distractions it very commonly means that they have made no effort at all to hear Mass well. It would be very odd if they were not distracted, considering that they do nothing to fix their minds on God, and allow every possible distracting object to come in their way. When "distractions" are only another name for carelessness, they are, of course, sinful; they are a great disrespect to God, and prevent you from receiving the graces His goodness has designed for you.

Let us first consider a few of the causes of distraction. You find a great many people who contrive to be always just a little late for Mass. They are seen hurrying in after Mass has begun—at the *Gloria*, or, perhaps, at the Gospel. Before they have well settled themselves in their places, and got themselves ready to attend, the Mass is half over. It would be very strange if you could pay much attention under these circumstances. By coming so late, and being in such a hurry, you have rendered it almost impossible to hear Mass devoutly. If you really want to attend, you ought to be in your place a few minutes before Mass commences, and then you would have time to collect your thoughts. "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God" (Ecclus. xviii. 23). If some sort of preparation

is required for every kind of prayer, how much more necessary is it for so solemn an act as the Holy Mass? You can hardly expect, then, to hear Mass profitably if you do not give some little time for preparation—that is, time to withdraw your thoughts from worldly affairs, and time to put yourself in the presence of God.

If you would avoid distraction, you must also pay attention to your outward demeanour. You should take your place and position in church in such a way as to have as few external things as possible to distract your attention. Some people, when they come to church, instead of looking out for the place in which they can say their prayers best, stand about the door, or take up some position where their thoughts are likely to be called away every moment. Others, again, seem to fancy that the great object is to make themselves as comfortable as they can; they take the easiest possible posture, and give way to natural indolence and love of repose. You cannot be surprised, in these cases, if they afterwards complain that their minds are filled with distractions, and that they have found it very hard to think of God.

External position is not important of itself. You may pray just as well sitting down or standing as you could do on your knees; still it cannot be denied that, as a rule, the bodily attitude has a considerable effect upon the *mental* attitude, and the tone of mind in which you approach Almighty God. If you attend Mass in a lounging, irreverent way, sitting down through the greater part of the time without any necessity, it is pretty certain that your prayers have not been what they ought to be. It would be very hard for any one to approach Almighty God as a Christian ought, and yet maintain a careless and lounging behaviour. How is it possible to combine such an exterior with the spirit of awe, reverence, and love which ought to animate one who is adoring his Creator?

In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican our Lord describes "two men who went up into the Temple to pray." He gives us a vivid idea of the demeanour of the two: the Pharisee, full of himself, and of his own dignity and goodness, and the Publican, who, "standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Our Lord concludes by saying: "I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other" (St. Luke xviii. 13).

If, my dear brethren, we could only imagine to ourselves that our Lord was watching us as He watched the Pharisee and the Publican, when we go into His house to worship Him—if we

thought that He was going to observe our behaviour both external and internal, as we assist at the Holy Mass, in order to pronounce that we go home justified or not, I think that most of us would find something in our behaviour that we should be glad to alter.

It is an important thing to begin well. The first act of your entering the church will give the tone to all the rest you do. If you come into the church in a very reverent spirit, and make your genuflection to the Blessed Sacrament as you ought, and begin by a few minutes' very fervent adoration, bowing yourself down before your Creator, you will find it very easy to keep up the same spirit during the rest of the Mass.

I have said that there are a great many different ways of hearing Mass. So long as you are joining in the Holy Sacrifice, and attending to the great action carried on before you, it does not matter what form of words you use. It is very important, however, to fix upon *some* way of hearing Mass. If you have not taken pains to consider how you are to hear Mass, and have not provided the prayers necessary, you are almost certain to be distracted. Very few people are able to keep their minds recollected in prayer for any time without *something* to fix their attention and recall them if they are wandering.

You may, if you like, follow the very words which the priest is saying at the altar. You can find no words more beautiful or touching than those of the Church's Liturgy. The greater part of this, the Ordinary of the Mass, is to be found in most prayer-books, and a little attention to what the priest is doing will enable you to follow accurately.

You are not, however, obliged to recite all the prayers the priest says. You may read the "Devotions for Mass," which are found in all prayer-books. These prayers are simpler in their language than the prayers of the Missal, and better suited to some people. You may also hear Mass very well by making a meditation in the course of it. The Mass is the continuation of our Lord's Sacrifice, and, at the same time, a memorial of His Passion, and not only of the Passion, but of all the other events of His life. You may, therefore, very well take any scene of the Life and Passion of our Lord, and place it before your imagination during Mass, and try to draw from it all the devout feelings and aspirations it would naturally lead to. Many people, for example, recite the Rosary during Mass, and make meditations on the different scenes in the life of our Lord which are presented by that devotion.

And now, my dear brethren, to conclude what I have been saying on this important subject: You have to hear Mass; it is

one of the highest duties and greatest privileges which God has given to us as Catholics. To hear it well you must be regular, and never allow anything but an absolute necessity to keep you away; you must be punctual, and not slight the Holy Sacrifice, and deprive yourself by coming so late as to be unable to attend properly; you must have the intention of joining in all the great ends of sacrifice, and you must do your best to give your mind and heart to our Lord for that short time, with as little distraction as possible.

If you do this diligently, then will our Lord give you to drink of the living waters of His grace. "The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain springing up into life everlasting" (St. John iv. 14).

SERMON XLVIII.

The Ritual of Mass.

"And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar" (Apoc. viii. 3).

THE Holy Mass is the great sacrifice of the Catholic Church. It is, my dear brethren, the greatest and most solemn action that can be done on earth, and the most comprehensive in its effects; but it is also the most simple. In that one sacrifice, in which our Lord offers Himself upon the altar, the different ends of all the ancient sacrifices are accomplished. What was done by the varied sacrificial rites of the Old Law is carried out, in an infinitely more perfect way, by the few essential words by which our Lord has ordained that the Sacrifice of the Mass should be accomplished.

There is, however, another way in which we may look at the Holy Mass. It is the central act of all the public worship offered to God in His Church. There are seasons of thanksgiving when the Church has to raise her voice in gratitude to God for His favours; and there are seasons of mourning, when nothing is heard but sorrowful supplication, when, "between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people" (Joel ii. 17). In all these different expressions of feeling the Holy Mass takes the principal place, and in it all the different and varied acts of worship which men can offer to God are contained.

Around the essentials of the Holy Mass, therefore, has grown up a rich and varied ritual, as a means of expressing all the different feelings with which men approach to the Holy Sacrifice. The external part which has been added to the essential sacrifice is not, indeed, necessary of itself, but, at the same time, it is the natural and reasonable expression of the ideas and feelings which men have in the service of God. I propose to-day, therefore, to speak of the Ritual or Liturgy of the Mass.

Catholics understand very well all the external ceremonial of the Church; that is, they feel at once that the external ceremonies are reasonable and becoming, although, perhaps, they do not take as much trouble as they might to understand the exact

meaning of them. It is quite different, however, with Protestants. They have a prejudice on the subject, and their first idea on seeing Catholic ceremonial is one of repugnance and dislike. We hear, or used to hear, for instance, a great deal about "mummeries" and "superstitious usages;" all of which is really the result of prejudice and want of thought. It is very necessary, therefore, for Catholics to understand pretty well the meaning and origin, as well as the use, of their own ceremonial, both for their own benefit, and that they may have a good explanation to give to any one who asks. A few words of kind and courteous explanation to strangers may often be the means of doing much good.

To begin with, let us consider the origin of the Mass—that is, how it got into its present shape as a Liturgy. We hear about the Holy Mass in the Acts of the Apostles: "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers;" and again: "Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts ii. 42–46). St. Proclus, a writer of the fifth century, gives us this account of the way in which the Liturgy of the Mass grew up.

He says: "After our Saviour was taken up into heaven, the Apostles, before being scattered over the whole world, being gathered together in oneness of mind, passed whole days in prayer; and, having found the Mystic Sacrifice of the Lord's Body a great consolation, they sang it at very great length; for this, and teaching, they considered preferable to anything else. With very great gladness and much joy were they instant in this Divine Sacrifice, ever bearing in mind the Lord's word, which says: 'This is My body,' and 'Do this in memory of Me,' and 'He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him.' For this cause, too, with a contrite heart, they sang prayers, earnestly deploring the divine aid; yea, they also accustomed those who had been recently baptized from amongst the Jews and Gentiles to the things of the dispensation of grace, and, teaching them to leave aside those which were before that dispensation of grace, as being but shadows of that grace, they instructed them religiously. Through those prayers, therefore, they expected the advent of the Holy Ghost, that, by His own divine presence, He might make and render the bread that lay there for sacrifice, and the wine mixed with water, that very same body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; which is no less done even to this day, and will be done to the consummation of the world." St. Proclus goes on to say that St. John Chrysostom, to meet the degeneracy of the times, shortened the

Liturgy, and says: "For this cause he also omitted much, and arranged it to be celebrated in a conciser form, for fear lest by degrees, men who are specially fond of a kind of liberty and ease, deluded by the deceitful reasonings of the enemy, might keep aloof from so great an apostolical and divine tradition" (see "Faith of Catholics," vol. ii., p. 505).

This passage gives us a beautiful idea of how the Ritual of the Mass was first arranged. We can fancy ourselves the Apostles meeting together for the "breaking of bread." They still had, sounding in their ears, the very words of our Lord at His last supper: "Do this in commemoration of Me"—they could still see the tender, loving countenance with which He sat down with them at that table; and, moreover, they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and could recall and understand all the instruction He had given them. Our Lord had promised them this. He had said to them: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (St. John xiv. 26).

In those parts of the world where the Christian faith was first established, this common ritual assumed by degrees a character suited to the requirements of the people. Antioch was the first place where the Christians became numerous. There it was that the faithful were first called Christians. The ritual there adopted, and in use in the Eastern Church, was called after the Apostle St. James, who was the first Bishop of Jerusalem. Soon after the Church spread greatly in Egypt, and the Liturgy used there was called after St. Mark, the disciple of St. Peter. Finally, Rome, the centre of the pagan world, was converted, and the Western Church adopted the Liturgy called by the name of St. Peter.

These three Liturgies were all substantially the same—that is, they all contained the same general idea, and the same essential parts, but they varied in the arrangement. The ceremonies and prayers used to express the meaning of the sacrifice, and the language used were all different.

From these three come all the Liturgies in use at the present day. The Mass is celebrated in all these different forms, and yet is everywhere really the very same thing. During the octave of the Epiphany—which is the feast of the Gentiles—coming to our Lord—the Mass used to be celebrated in Rome in all the different rites and languages adopted in different parts of the Church.

In England and the Western Church, we only see the Roman Mass. There is one variation of this which is common enough—

that is, the Dominican rite. If you go into a Dominican church, you will find that the Mass there differs a good deal from the Roman rite.

I must now come to the question: What is the good of all this ceremonial? Why can you not say your prayers just as well without it? Would it not be better to have everything much more simple.

The answer is very obvious. You must have a ritual of some sort, because you can't do without it. It is impossible for men to meet together for the public worship of God without *some* established ceremonial or other. The very nature of man requires it. You might change the ceremonial, and have a simpler one—but a ceremonial of some kind you *must* have. Take any of those who object to *our* ceremonies, go into their churches, and you will find *some* authorized, established form of conducting divine worship, and you would probably find that they are just as much attached to their own particular usages as we are to the ceremonial appointed by the Church.

It is not, therefore, a question between *ritual* and *no ritual*, but between their customs and ours, because I think it may safely be said that there never was in this world a body of men united in the worship of God without *some* kind of ritual.

But they would say their forms are so much *simpler*, and they assume that there is some special beauty in this *simplicity*. Simplicity, however, sometimes means nothing else than poverty —that everything is as poor, and meaningless, and commonplace as can be devised. What is the particular beauty of this? Why should God's service be made poor and commonplace? Why, on the contrary, since by the very law of our nature we must have an outward ritual of some kind, should we not dedicate to Almighty God everything choice and beautiful?

If we want to know the *sort* of externals which surround the worship of God, where can we find a better example than in the ceremonial which He Himself established upon earth? That ritual, indeed, has come to an end. It was for a time, and its object has been fulfilled. Still, the principle on which that worship was established remains true.

We know very well that Almighty God, in the Old Law, established the most elaborate and magnificent ceremonial that was ever seen in the world. The Temple built for Him upon earth was the richest and most gorgeous that the hands of man could fashion. Nothing was left to chance, but everything was most diligently made after the pattern given by God Himself. "And all the house was covered within with cedar, having the turning and joints thereof artfully wrought, and carvings pro-

jecting out: all was covered with boards of cedar, and no stone could be seen in the wall . . . . and all the walls of the Temple round about he carved with divers figures and carvings: and he made in them cherubim and palm trees, and divers representations standing out and coming forth from the wall. And the floor of the house he also overlaid with gold within and without" (III. Kings vi. 18-30).

And in this temple Almighty God ordained a most complete and elaborate system of external worship. The sacrifices to be offered up on all occasions; the exact manner of offering; the vestments to be worn by the priests during their ministrations were all regulated, and the observance of these regulations was a matter of the strictest command.

Nothing can show the importance which God attached to the ceremonial He had appointed in a more striking manner than the story of Nadab and Abiu, which I before quoted. "Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, taking their censers, put fire therein, and incense on it, offering before the Lord strange fire; which was not commanded them. And fire coming out from before the Lord destroyed them" (Lev. x. 1)

Now, my dear brethren, may we not very well ask, If such a ritual was once ordained by God as suitable to His service, why should there be any particular merit in great simplicity in the externals of religion? Why should we not try to make His worship as rich and splendid as we can? If we do so, we are only imitating Him, and trying to carry out the principle which He established for His own worship.

Again, if we want a still higher example of worship, let us listen to the account St. John gives us of that which goes on around God's throne in heaven—as far as it can be represented to mortal eyes. "Behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne One sitting. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders: and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which were the seven Spirits of God. And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes, before and behind. . . . . And they rested not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when these living

creatures gave glory, and honour, and benediction to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth on the throne and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, because thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv. 2).

Nothing can be more stately and gorgeous than the vision which St. John gives us of the worship of "Him that sitteth on the throne," and the Lamb in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

I said that in the nature of things there must be a ceremonial of some kind, and that every religion that ever was has something of the sort. I did not, however, my dear brethren, mean that the Catholic ritual contains nothing more than this, and is precisely the same in principle as the usages customary in Protestant churches. In these you have certain customs rigidly adhered to; you have a certain dress—a gown at one time, and a surplice at another. You find the minister reading from one place and preaching from another, and administering the Sacrament from a third, according to forms distinctly laid by law or usage. All this is necessary to ensure decorum in the public worship of God.

The Catholic ritual is for the same purpose, but means much more. It has the richness and variety of ceremonial which the Old Law enjoined, and for the very same reason. The splendours of the Jewish worship were an acknowledgment of the presence of God. The Temple of Jerusalem was so splendid because it was the "House of God."

By this we mean not only that God was present there in the sense that He is present everywhere, but that He was present in some *special* way. If He had been there exactly, as He is throughout the universe, all the special marks of reverence would have been without meaning. It was not so. There, in that temple, He dwelt in an unusual way. His presence was manifested sensibly to the people; it was the place where He chose to receive homage and grant petitions. The place where God manifests His presence to His people is holy ground, and deserving of every mark of reverence. God spake to Moses from the burning bush, and said to him: "Come not nigh hither, but put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. iii. 5).

In the Temple, on the extended wings of the cherubim, over the ark of the covenant, was the "mercy seat" of God, where His presence was continually manifested. It was for this reason

that such extraordinary reverence was shown to the "Holy of Holies."

We read how Solomon dedicated the temple he had built: "And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord into its place—that is, the oracle of the temple into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim, so that the cherubim spread their wings over the place in which the ark was set, and covered the ark itself and its stones," and "when they all sounded together both with trumpets, and voices, and cymbals, and organs, and with divers kinds of musical instruments, and lifted up their voices on high: the sound was heard afar off, so that when they began to praise the Lord and say: Give glory to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever: the house of God was filled with a cloud, nor could the priests stand to minister by reason of the cloud. For the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God" (II. Paral. v. 7–13).

It was this presence, this glory of the Lord filling the house, which was the plain reason for all the elaborate and beautiful preparations which abounded in the Temple; and in the same way it is the special presence of God in the Catholic Church which gives a reason for a splendid ritual.

If the church were a place where God is present, indeed, but present exactly as He is in every other part of His creation, there would be no use in a splendid ceremonial. You must even then have a ritual of some kind, or you could not have a worship in common; but a ceremonial full of symbolical meaning and signs of reverence would be out of place if there was nothing to represent, and nothing special to reverence. If, for instance, a church is simply a place where people meet to say their prayers, and hear sermons, there is no sense in a ritual which expresses reverence and awe. Why should the building be different from any other building? Why should it be anything else than a convenient and decorous meeting-place?

The ceremonial of the Catholic Church has this one great object to remind you of the special presence of God. "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17). It is different from all other places, because in every church there is a Presence which is not found elsewhere. Almighty God makes the church His house, and resides there by the Real Presence of our Lord on the altar, with a reality of which the mercy-seat of the ancient Temple was only a figure.

Everything reminds you of this Presence. The shape of the church itself, and the portion railed off for the sanctuary; the lamp which is constantly kept burning before the tabernacle:

the cross on the altar, surrounded by candles, denoting the place of the daily sacrifice. These are the perpetual memorials of our Lord's presence.

You cannot go into the church at any hour without being reminded that, night and day, He is there. It doesn't matter whether there are crowds of worshippers, or whether you are there in gloom and solitude. It doesn't matter whether you are in a cathedral like St. Peter's, the grandest building that man can erect, or in a poor hut used as a church. You always see the signs of the same Great Presence—the insignia of royalty, I may say.

So it is with the Holy Mass. The priest in his vestments at the altar, the candles burning, the different ceremonies employed, so unlike anything to be seen elsewhere—all tell us of this great unseen Presence.

There is, however, something else clearly expressed in the Catholic ceremonial. It is that the church is not a place of prayer only, but of action. There are many things in the ritual of the Church which can hardly be accounted for only by the special Divine Presence, and so it was with the Jewish Temple. The idea of a special Presence of God was, almost necessarily, combined with the idea of sacrifice offered to Him, and it was because of the sacrifice that so elaborate a worship was ordained by God. Why were the priests clad in such mysterious garments.

See how the priests of the Old Law were clad: "He made of violet and purple, scarlet and fine linen, the vestments for Aaron to wear when he ministered in the holy places, as the Lord commanded Moses. So he made an ephod of gold, violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen . . . . he prepared also two onyx stones, fast set and closed in gold, and graven, by the art of a lapidary, with the names of the children of Israel . . . . he made also a rational with embroidered work, according to the work of the ephod . . . . and little bells of purest gold, which they put between the pomegranates at the bottom of the tunic . . . . a bell of gold, and a pomegranate, wherewith the high priest went adorned, when he discharged his ministry, as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Exod. xxxix. 1).

What do all these vestments and ornaments mean? They mean action. That the Temple is not a place merely of prayer, but a place where some great thing is done, and it is to do this great action that the priests are so adorned.

Thus it is with the Catholic Church. It is the special presence of God, and the perpetual Sacrifice appointed by our Lord, which is the key to all the Church's ritual. Without these two ideas it must dwindle down to the poverty and

"simplicity" which mark Protestant churches. If nothing is done in the churches which is not also done outside them there certainly seems no particular reason for ceremonial and solemnity; but if the Church is *really* the house of God, and He is present there in a more special way than elsewhere, and if He there requires a special recognition by Sacrifice of His Divine Presence, then it is plain that nothing can be too magnificent, or costly, or beautiful—nothing can be too carefully considered or diligently executed for His service.

The Psalmist says: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps. xxv. 8). You cannot, my dear brethren, be good Catholics without having some love and zeal for the beauty of God's house, and this you cannot have without understanding, at least generally, the meaning and object of what you see. The services of the Church, the decoration of the altar, the flowers, the lights, and incense are not things of mere outward show. They are not meant to please the eyes and gratify the taste of the congregation. They are meant as a solemn acknowledgment of the presence of God in His Church, and a humble offering to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. They are meant to speak to your eyes and senses of our Lord hidden in His tabernacle, and residing amongst men for the love of you, and to tell you of the great things which Jesus is always doing amongst us. "There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not."

The external objects and ceremonial of the Church are meant to make us at all times remember the reverence due to Him, that we may not forget, in the greatness of His condescension, that He is our Creator, and that we are but dust and ashes in His sight.

And yet something more. The ritual of the Church is one of those things which bind men in one great communion. By it we are united with past ages and with distant countries. The Mass has come down from the times of the Apostles. The altar which we see, with its stone consecrated by the relics, reminds us of the days when the faithful assembled to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice on the tombs of the martyrs, not knowing how soon they might be called on to shed their blood for Christ. The lights which surround the altar may bring back to our minds the obscurity of the catacombs in which the Christians had to meet in times of persecution. The vestments, the forms and language of the Holy Mass, are the very same, substantially, which St. Augustine brought with him when he came to England to convert our Saxon forefathers. We are united, therefore, with all ages of the Christian Church, not only in

faith, but by the very prayers and ceremonies which they used in their day.

When we take part in the Holy Sacrifice we cannot but feel that we are members of this great universal Church, which unites all ages and all nations together. If we look higher still, and raise our eyes to the glorious Church in heaven, with which the militant Church on earth is united, we cannot but feel that the same bond of union still subsists. As we, in our poverty, are celebrating and honouring the presence amongst us of the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," we are but faintly and feebly imitating the glorious worship of that heavenly Jerusalem where Christ is reigning with His saints.

SERMON XLIX.

The Marriage State.

"And He said to them: Go you also into my vineyard" (St. Matt. xx. 4).

In the parable of the householder sending labourers into his vineyard our Blessed Lord gives us a striking picture of the dealings of Almighty God with His creatures. We, my dear brethren, are His labourers; we have all one object, to work for Him; and one rule, which is to work according to His will. From the highest to the lowest, He sends us out into His vineyard, and assigns to us different tasks, according to His own good pleasure, and when evening comes He will reward us for the work we have performed.

Our Lord says to each one of us: "Go into My vineyard;" but He does not send us all to the same part, or give to all the same work to do. In the vineyard there is an immense variety of work to be done, and all the labourers cannot possibly be engaged in the same kind of labour. To produce an abundant harvest, each one must perform the part of the work entrusted to him So it is in human life. We all have to work for the glory of God; but, in addition to the general duties we all owe to God and our neighbour, each one has his own particular sphere of work, which is the duty of his own state of life.

These two classes of work cannot be separated—that is, to be a good Christian you must be faithful, not only in the general duties you owe to God, but also in the special duties to which you yourselves are called. If you neglect these, it is quite clear that you are not doing your duty to Almighty God as you ought to do. If you were very diligent in prayer, and exact in performing all your duties to God, but, at the same time, were not conscientious and diligent in doing the work which belongs to your position in life—if, indeed, the one did not lead you to the other—you certainly would be very far from pleasing God.

The duties of the state of life to which God has called us are most important for many reasons. To begin with, they take up by far the greater portion of our time. The portion of our lives which is given *directly* to the service of God is very small in comparison: if, therefore, we do not take pains to perfect and

sanctify our ordinary actions, so as to make them *indirectly*, at any rate, the work of God, our service will be very deficient.

"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" These words are the very first lesson our Lord gave to men with His own lips, and are meant to teach us that we are always to be engaged, in some way or other, directly or indirectly, in doing the work for which we came into this world.

The ordinary duties of life are, besides, the chief things that men see. Our neighbours naturally look to see the results of our religion in our daily lives—and they have a right to look for such results. Our Lord tells us that "the kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (St. Matt. xiii. 33). Our religion is to be like this leaven, which is to be "hidden" in our daily lives till the whole is leavened.

It is most important, therefore, to dwell on the duties of different states of life. A priest has not only to exhort his flock in general to be good Christians, but he must also say to them individually, "Be a good father," "be a good husband," "be a good son," "be conscientious in doing the work of your profession or trade."

But, then, my dear brethren, here comes the difficulty. It is very hard to address exhortations to a congregation of people which apply to only one half of those present. It is very difficult to preach to one class, to exhort or reprove them, and dwell upon all the obligations that apply to their state of life, in the presence of others to whom what is said does not apply. For this reason the duties of different states are not spoken of so frequently or so minutely as might be desired.

Notwithstanding this difficulty, however, it is very important, when treating of the commandments, to speak in turn of all the principal states of life. After all, what is said is sure to apply, with some little modification, to most people at one time or another of their lives, even if it is not applicable at the present moment.

When we come to speak of the different conditions of the social life of men, it is clear that the marriage state is the most prominent and striking. The duties of this state are so important, and the results of their being well or ill done are so serious—whether for good or evil—that I cannot avoid speaking of it, in spite of the great difficulties which it presents.

The marriage tie is the bond which binds mankind together, and on its inviolability and purity the welfare of Christian society depends. If the Christian family is what it ought to be it is

pretty sure that society will be moral and religious ; but if family union is once broken, and husbands and wives, parents and children, cease to do their duty to each other, Christian society is in the greatest peril.

It is for this reason that our Lord so distinguished the sacrament of Matrimony. He raised the marriage contract to the dignity of a sacrament, and made it the figure of His own union with His Church. It is for the same reason that our Lord made a marriage feast the occasion of His first miracle. He sat down to table with the guests at a wedding feast, and turned the water into wine to show the particular favour with which He regarded the married state, and the dignity He desired to confer on it.

When our Lord chose to establish a household on earth for Himself, and to dwell so many years with Mary and Joseph in the holy house of Nazareth, He did not disdain to set an example to us of the virtues which every Christian family ought to exhibit. What could show us more clearly the importance of the married state and the sacred nature of the duties belonging to it ?

Marriage can hardly fail to be a turning-point in the life of any man or woman, As a general rule, the whole of a man's life, for good or evil, is affected by the sort of marriage he has made. If he has married well—that is, judiciously and prudently —he has put himself into a condition which gives every hope of happiness. He has made it much easier for himself to lead a steady and religious life, and has taken the best possible means for securing perseverance. Very often we find young people who have been leading indifferent and, perhaps, sinful lives before their marriage who have afterwards become very satisfactory and good Christians.

Unfortunately, however, my dear brethren, the contrary is sometimes the case. We find instances of young men and young women who were very good and religious once, but, unfortunately, they made foolish marriages, and their marriage has turned them away from God. If a good Christian marriage makes the road to heaven easy, a bad one makes it very difficult. A foolish marriage often puts such obstacles in the way of duty that nothing but very special grace from God can overcome them.

The sacrament of Matrimony gives great graces, and those who correspond faithfully with these graces are enabled to overcome even the difficulties of an ill-considered marriage, but it is always a great risk.

When we think of the great duties which men and women take upon themselves when they are married, and the important

effects which marriage will certainly have on their future lives, we should imagine that all good and sensible people would make it a matter of very grave consideration. We should naturally suppose that they would think very seriously of the duties they were undertaking, and consider well how the marriage would affect the happiness and spiritual condition of the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, we too often see people who seem to lose all common sense on the occasion. They rush into marriage with less consideration than they would give to the most trifling affairs of life, and very often with scarcely any appreciation of the responsibilities they are taking upon themselves.

This is, perhaps, because they are not accustomed to dwell upon the serious obligations involved in marriage. Men are too apt to look upon it as a matter of convenience and worldly interest, or as a matter of fancy. They do not ask themselves often enough whether they are prepared to take upon themselves serious duties and heavy responsibilities; and whether the alliance they propose will help or hinder them in the way of their salvation. This most important point is too often quite left out of sight. Let the other considerations of worldly prudence and of affection come in as they *ought* to do, but in their right place, as subordinate to the great idea of duty.

About their marriage, more than about anything else, people should ask the question, "*Quid hoc ad æternitatem*—How will this affect my salvation?"

The natural consequence of this carelessness in entering into the wedded state is that many people have very little idea of the duties belong to it. When the first excitement of a new position is passed, do they think much of the duties of their new state? They have solemnly undertaken before God—what? Unfortunately, a great many do not trouble themselves to consider; and yet certainly they will be judged by these duties. God, my dear brethren, does not forget the obligations and duties we have taken upon ourselves because we do not choose to think of them.

Let us, then, speak about the duties of the married state. What are they? When people are married they undertake a twofold duty—a duty to society, and a duty to each other. They are called by God to a very honourable condition, to which are attached many graces and blessings; but it is on a very distinct condition. The condition is that they undertake the charge of rearing and educating the children that it may please God to send them. This is a charge which involves a great many inconveniences, troubles, and pains to both parties, as God has been pleased to distribute them. These troubles

are part of the inheritance of our fallen nature, and men and women are alike bound to take their share.

If they do not enter loyally into the performance of these duties, but shirk them when they are irksome or painful, they are disregarding the special obligations of their state, and failing in their duty to God and to men. It is not very uncommon to hear married people murmuring at these burdens, and finding fault with each other—complaining, perhaps, that they have too many children—just as if they had a right to be exempted from the ordinary and natural troubles of the state of life they have chosen to enter.

The charge of a family, should God give them one, is the great duty which married people owe to society; but they have many others. They are placed in a position which gives them a great influence on all around them, and they have in consequence very important duties to fulfil towards their neighbours. I want, however, to-day to speak more particularly of the duties which married people owe to each other.

Husband and wives undertake to "love and be faithful to one another." A man undertakes to give his wife his love, and an exclusive sort of love of which he has no right to give a share to any one else. "A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife" (St. Mark x. 7). This love ought to be a real and heartfelt love, and, at the same time, in reason, a demonstrative love—that is to say, a love which shows itself in outward manner. I say this because you sometimes find married people who rather assume an air of indifference, as if it were rather a fine thing to appear cold and distant to each other.

The foundation of this love ought to be respect. There is great danger of married people forgetting the mutual respect they ought to have, and saying and doing things to each other which are disrespectful, sometimes positively rude—things which they would never dream of saying to any one else. It is a very common thing to find people who are very polite to strangers—whose good-will or ill-will is unimportant—and at the same time rude and careless in manner to their own husbands and wives.

No love can be kept up very long without respect, and no respect will last if not accompanied by some *outward* sign of respect; it is, therefore, very important for married people not to allow themselves to fall into rudeness of manner and disrespectful behaviour to each other.

When there is real respect, there is always confidence. If you cannot trust a person, it is plain that you have not any respect for him. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that husbands and wives should show the esteem they have for each other by

mutual confidence. Before entering upon so close a union as married life, people should be pretty sure that they can trust each other, and must then take care not to allow anything to interfere with the confidence which they have undertaken to give.

There is scarcely anything more destructive to the happiness of married life than jealousy of disposition and the habit of mistrust. A jealous temper becomes worse in proportion as you give way to it, and can always find plenty of things to exercise itself upon; you may be quite sure that grounds of complaint will never be wanting. If husbands and wives are jealous, and always suspecting and watching each other, no amount of precaution or prudence is sufficient to avoid giving pretexts for jealousy. The only hope of peace is in the determination of the parties to strike at the root of the evil by getting rid of the jealous temper. If they can only make up their minds to be loyal to each other, and give each other generous confidence, it is probable that all the grounds of suspicion will speedily vanish.

It is necessary, however, on the other hand, to avoid giving unreasonable grounds for suspicion. Husbands and wives have no right to do imprudent and unusual things—things which are likely to look suspicious in the eyes of the world. It is not enough to keep out of real harm, but you must also try to avoid the *appearance* of evil, especially where an apparently well-founded suspicion can produce so much evil as it does in married life.

Love is founded in mutual respect and the confidence arising from it; but it shows itself most in sympathy—in having, that is, a community of *feeling*. Supposing, for instance, that you do not care in the least for your husband's friends, or for his pursuits, and allow yourself to think everything connected with them is a great annoyance, about which you cannot be expected to trouble yourself—how can there be much *sympathy* between you and your husband? Again, a woman is quite indifferent to her husband's opinions; and, in trifling things, at any rate, does not care to find out or attend to his wishes. By this she shows a want of sympathy which is hardly consistent with love. If, as married people, you have no idea of interchanging confidences or consulting each other in difficulties, and do not share each others pains and pleasures—in short, have no *sympathy*—how is it possible for you to show your love, or to have a great deal to show?

But perhaps the most important, and certainly the most difficult, part of the love which married people owe to each

other is mutual forbearance—bearing patiently and kindly with each others faults. This is obviously a very serious part of the duty of their state; and no love which does not include forbearance will last for very long.

People sometimes complain unreasonably of the faults of their husbands and wives, but when they married they knew what they were undertaking. They knew perfectly well that they were not going to marry angels, and that, as a matter of course, a great deal of forbearance would be necessary. By forbearance we mean that each party should bear patiently with the weaknesses and deficiencies of the other, and make all possible allowance for them: and not only weaknesses, but positive faults and sins. Besides this, you must be tolerant of differences of opinion, and of different ways of thought, and also of different habits. It is sometimes easier for people to pardon serious faults than to overlook divergencies from the ideas and usages to which they have been accustomed.

This sort of forbearance is obviously necessary if there is to be any permanent peace. St. Paul tells us that we have our treasure "in earthern vessels," and, from our very constitution, we cannot avoid in some degree giving pain to our neighbours, and wounding their feelings from time to time. This is true of the common intercourse of life, and it must evidently be more conspicuously so in a state in which two people are so constantly and intimately brought together as man and wife. In the nature of things they must frequently give each other cause of annoyance in little things, if not in great ones, and, therefore, the love and mutual forbearance, by which alone these small troubles can be overcome, are the necessary virtues of their state.

I am afraid married people do not consider often enough the terms on which they have taken each other. "I take thee, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, till death do us part, and thereto I plight thee my troth." These are very solemn words, and it would be well if all husbands and wives thought of them more frequently, and remembered that their conduct towards each other will have some day to be compared with the promises made and implied in this covenant.

The last and most important part of the love which ought to exist between married people is that which shows itself in spiritual help and care. It would be a very poor love which cared for all the little passing details of life, and spent itself in little momentary acts of kindness and demonstrations of affection, without any thought for the all-important future. We find

this, however, too often ; wives who seem to take no interest in the religious state of their husbands, and think it no business of theirs ; and husbands, in like manner, who do not consider themselves bound to take any trouble for their wives. And yet we cannot doubt that this is one of the great ends of Matrimony. God intended that man and wife should walk hand-in-hand through life, and help each other through all its rough and hard ways, through all its decline and weakness, both in body and in spirit. The marriage tie was intended as means by which each one should have some one specially charged to help him, to sympathize with him in trouble, to strengthen him in temptation, to help him if he falls, and to stand by him to the last, though all the rest of the world should fail him. It was meant not only to make life pleasanter, but also to make salvation easier, and those who take no thought beyond this world are doing the work which they have undertaken in a very unsatisfactory way.

This sort of neglect is, as I have said, common enough; sometimes it is really *neglect* and a carelessness about spiritual things, but more frequently, perhaps, it arises from a sort of shyness, which sometimes keep people from talking freely about the things nearest to their hearts. There is, it is true, a certain reason for this. Every human being, man or woman, married or unmarried, has a right to be free and uncontrolled in his own conscience. He may bind himself to another in worldly things, and may give up his own will, and put himself into the hands of another in such matters; but in conscience it is not so. You may not lawfully give up the rights of your conscience to any one, father or mother, husband or wife, since the very first of all duties is to do what your own conscience tells you is right before God. This sometimes creates a difficulty between people so closely bound together as husband and wife, and certainly makes a good deal of caution and forbearance necessary in dealing with religious matters. It will not do for either party to compel or over-persuade the other to act against the dictates of conscience. On the other hand, it is a great mistake for husbands or wives to be over-exacting or censorious in trifling matters, as if their position gave them authority to dictate, or to call each other to account in religious matters. You are bound to respect each others rights in all things, but specially in matters of conscience.

The feeling of non-interference, which up to a certain point is a very right one, does not, however, by any means justify people saying, "Matters of conscience are no concern of mine." This is like saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" You are bound to

be considerate, and to respect all just rights of conscience; but, also, you are bound to do all that patience, and diligence, and gentleness can do for each others spiritual welfare. St. Paul tells St. Timothy to "be instant in season and out of season"—to "reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (II. Tim. iv. 2); and this is just what husbands and wives should do for each other when necessary—not, indeed, by much talking, which would be out of place, but by making use of all the thousand little opportunities for good which their state supplies to them.

I must not forget to mention the most efficacious way in which they may do good to each others souls—the method of doing good which will, perhaps, avail when others cannot be used, or fail in effect—that is by persevering good example. If you are earnest, and self-denying in the practice of your religion, your example can hardly fail to do good—that is, if your conduct, generally, is consistent with your religion. If you are very zealous in the practice of your religion, and take a great deal of trouble to observe all the laws of the Church, but do not carry this religious spirit into the duties of your state, then your very zeal may do harm; but real and consistent good example is certain to have a good effect. Good example is, then, one unfailing means of doing good in the married state, and one which husbands and wives owe to each other.

These, then, are some of the principal duties of married people towards each other—love and fidelity, mutual respect and forbearance in their ordinary intercourse, as well as assistance, encouragement, and good example in the way of their salvation.

I must say one word more about the extreme importance of these duties. The great and solemn tie which binds husband and wife together has this effect—it makes little things into great ones. Many things, which are comparatively trifling in themselves, become matters of importance when they seriously affect the principal duties of your state; and, in the same way, many faults, which are insignificant in themselves, become serious. For instance, there are many little faults of manner, many acts of roughness or selfishness, which do not matter very much in ordinary society, which may, nevertheless, be destructive of the peace of your home, and almost incompatible with the due performance of the duties of your state. These things, then, have obviously become very important, by reason of the solemn obligations which you took upon yourselves when you entered the marriage state. Unfortunately, married people do not always see it in this light: on the contrary, they think they may indulge themselves in a thousand little faults of temper and acts of

selfishness in their daily domestic life which they would not dream of giving way to before strangers. "What does it matter what I say or do, if it is only before my own husband or wife, or before my own family?" That is the feeling on which people often act; whereas, in reality, their behaviour to strangers is *very* unimportant in comparison with their behaviour to their own husbands and wives.

I have now spoken, my dear brethren, of the ordinary duties of married people towards each other, but there is a good deal more to be said on the subject, which I propose to treat in my next sermon.

It may appear to many people that these things are small, and that there is no necessity for going into details; but, after all, life is made up of details. If we are to cultivate the portion of the vineyard which our Lord has entrusted to our care, so as to make it fruitful, we must not disdain to learn even the smallest things connected with it. Our work lies in the state of life to which we have been called, and we cannot be too diligent in learning all that belongs to it. When evening is come, and the Master calls all the labourers to pay them their hire, our reward will be, not in proportion to the importance of what we have been doing, or to the success we have obtained, but to the diligence and care with which we have laboured at the work entrusted to us. Amen.

SERMON L.

Husbands and Wives.

"Render, therefore, to all men their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honour to whom honour" (Rom. xiii. 7).

THE Apostle here calls our attention, my dear brethren, to the virtue of justice, and tells us that we are to give to "all men their dues." Justice is, in one sense, the most important of all virtues, because it comes into all the dealings of men with each other, and on it the whole framework of society is based. The word justice is generally applied to fair dealing in money matters; to buying and selling, and other things in which the rights of property are concerned; but in its wider sense it means giving to every creature the rights, privileges, and consideration due to it.

In this sense it is a very difficult duty. You will find a great many who are charitable and kind, but comparatively few people who are, in all respects, just. The virtue of justice requires two things—first, the power of seeing clearly and fairly what are the rights of others; and, then, willingness to observe those rights on all occasions. "Be just before you are generous," is a very common saying, and if you do not take the trouble to see and acknowledge the *rights* of others, they will not thank you very much for being generous to them. A great many of the troubles of mankind arise from a want of the sense of justice —troubles between nations—enmities between classes—bitterness between rich and poor, masters and servants—quarrels between parents and their children—most of these troubles arise from a want of due attention to the *rights* of others.

The virtue is at least as important in the married state as in any other relation of life, and it is in this point of view that I am going to consider it.

Husbands and wives often live unhappily together, not so much because they are not willing to do their duty to each other, but because they have never fairly considered what are the strict rights of each party. No kindness can ever quite make up for a want of a just appreciation of the rights of things —justice must be the foundation, and, then, there is abundant room for charity. I think it expedient, therefore, in this place

to say a few words about the distinctive rights which belong to husband and wife by the law of God.

The husband, in the first place, has a great position, and with it great rights, since he holds in his own household, in a special manner, the place of Almighty God, "From whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15). Nothing can be more striking than the way in which this position of dignity and reverence was given to the great saint whom our Lord chose for His earthly father—St. Joseph. He was made distinctly the head of the household—although that household consisted of none less in dignity than Jesus and His Blessed Mother—and the privileges of his position were recognized in all things. The commands of God were made known through St. Joseph, and to him was entrusted the charge of carrying them out, so that all the movements of the Holy Family were regulated by him: "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, saying Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee; for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (St. Matt. ii. 13).

A similar position belongs by right to every father and husband. He has a right, to begin with, to the *first* place—he has a right that neither parents, nor children, nor any one else, should ever be put before him, or be more considered than he is. Whatever he may be elsewhere, he has a right to be the first person in his own home, with his own wife and children. It is necessary to mention this, because women sometimes get so much taken up with their duties as mothers, and the necessary care of their children that they forget what is due by *right* to their husbands, and act as if the children and their wants and comforts were the first thing to be attended to, and that everything else might be left to take its chance. We read in the Book of Kings how "Elkana, her husband, said to her: Anna, why weepest thou? and why dost thou not eat? and why dost thou afflict my heart? Am I not better to thee than ten children?" (I. Kings i. 8). The husband, at any rate, has a right to the first place, and if any of his children are put before him it is a perversion of all law and justice.

To the husband belongs the right to lead. Where he goes it is the duty of the wife to follow; where he dwells, there must she dwell—that is, wherever his wishes are at all reasonable. It is for the wife to say to her husband, by the law of the state which she has entered, what Ruth said to Naomi out of charity, "Be not against me to desire that I should leave thee and depart, for whithersoever thou shalt go I will go, and where

thou shalt dwell I also will dwell; thy people shall be my people" (Ruth i. 16).

With this first place goes a great *deference*—that is, respect shown by attention to his wishes, not only in great things but in small ones, shown by respectful, dutiful words, and consideration even for his whims in trifles—it is all these things that show *deference*, and it is precisely to this deference that a husband has a right. This is shown specially by politeness of manner, and it is a sad thing that women sometimes fancy that politeness and good manners are thrown away upon their own husbands, however profusely they may display them to other people.

A great deal of the unhappiness of married life comes from a want of the proper deference and respect due from wives to their husbands. It is a very common thing to find women who indulge themselves in saying all sorts of disagreeable and insulting things to their husbands when they are irritated. They will pour out a stream of provoking language, which nothing will stop, and which is the fruitful cause of half the evils of married life. It is true there is very often provocation, but that does not take away from the evil effects of their conduct. Every word which is inconsistent with the fundamental duties of the state of life in which you are placed is sure, in the long run, to bring evil with it.

A husband, moreover, has a right that his wife should be jealous of his honour—that is, of the dignity, position, and consideration which he holds amongst other men. The Holy Scripture gives this as the distinction of a "valiant woman"—"Her husband is honourable in the gates when he sitteth among the senators of the land" (Prov. xxxi. 23). It is quite clear that a woman who has no feeling for her husband's dignity, and no care to see that he is treated with proper respect, both at home and abroad, is very far from understanding the duties of her state.

A husband, moreover, has, according to the general plan of Providence, the duty of providing for his family. He is the ordinary and natural bread-winner for his wife and children. In this capacity he has to work hard, to go out early and come home late, and "earn his bread by the sweat of his brow." On the other hand, he has a right that his wife and children should assist him as far as they can, and make things as easy for him as possible. If they cannot help in any other way, they are at least bound to do so by care and economy. A wife who does not trouble herself to consider what her husband's means are, and what he can afford, but spends recklessly and buys what-

ever she fancies, is very seriously neglecting the duties of her state. She is treating her husband, not as one with whom she has the closest possible union of interests, but as a person whose business it is to get money for her to spend. We, unfortunately, see a good many wives who do not seem to care how hard their husbands have to work, or what anxieties may be accumulated upon their husbands, so long as they have enough to spend on themselves and their children.

Such conduct as this is clearly wrong, and must ultimately destroy all domestic peace. Again, if a man is bound to go out to his work he has a right to expect that his wife shall keep his home in order. This is the special sphere of duty in which she is bound to labour. The Holy Scripture, giving a description of the mother of a family, says: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up and called her blessed: her husband, and he praised her" (Prov. xxxi. 27).

A great deal of the happiness of married life depends upon things that appear very small, and this in all classes of society. A man comes home from his day's work, and finds that everything indoors has been neglected—nothing has been done for his comfort, that no preparations have been made for his return; no one apparently has been thinking of him or what he has had to do. Neglect of this kind cannot fail to create bitterness and dissension, and we see the consequences of it every day. A man, therefore, who has to work for his wife and family has a right they should assist him, or, at least, do what they can to support and comfort him in his toil.

Besides all this, a woman is bound to be obedient to her husband. This is a very unpleasant thing to talk about in an age when the idea of obedience for God's sake seems to have gone so much out of fashion; but such is the law of God. It is, indeed, to be a *willing* obedience, and a reasonable obedience, and obedience shown in all lawful things; but a *real* obedience, which means a real giving up of your own way—not merely *pretending* to give up your own way, and then getting it by stratagem or obstinacy, but real obedience for God's sake.

Let us hear what the Holy Scripture says on this subject: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord. Because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. . . . . Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things" (Eph. v. 22). "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as it behoveth in the Lord" (Col. iii. 18). St. Peter says: "In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands; that if any

believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives" (I. St. Peter iii. 1.)

The obedience of a wife, however, although, as I have said, it is to be a *real* obedience, and not a pretence, is not the same thing as the obedience of a child—that is, it is not the minute, implicit, unquestioning obedience which parents have a right to expect from young children. The ground of this sort of obedience is that the children are too young and ignorant to guide themselves; they are in a state of training, their reason is imperfect, and their rights are, consequently in abeyance. This state of things makes it essential that they should be under minute personal control. The kind of subjection which a man can ask from his wife is of a very different sort. It is the obedience of a reasonable, intelligent partner, who is quite able to judge for herself and act independently in matters of detail, and who has a right to have an opinion of her own. To attempt to exact from a wife the sort of obedience required from young children would be an act of tyranny.

On the other hand, too, the wife has her rights, and these are just as sacred and inviolable as her husband's. She has a right to be treated, not as a slave or a plaything, but as a companion. She has a right to be placed in a position of honour and dignity, so that she shall be respected by all in her house. She has a right also to trust and to confidence, as an intelligent partner and sharer in all things—in worldly affairs, in plans and feelings; and, as a rule, in everything. "The heart of her husband trusteth in her" (Prov. xxxi. 11). Men sometimes forget this sort of right which their wives have. They are kind and indulgent, and never say a harsh word or do an uncivil thing; and yet they do not allow their wives to know anything of their affairs or feelings, or of really important concerns of any kind. A man who acts in this way is not treating his wife as an intelligent companion and real partner, but rather as a child and plaything. We may rely upon it that love and kindness of this sort can never be satisfactory, because they have not the foundation of justice at the bottom; the man does not recognize that his wife has a right to be more than a plaything.

Besides this, of course, as I before said, a wife has a right to an undivided love, which may not be given to any one else. In its own way it is quite exclusive, and may not be shared. This love has a special element of tenderness and gentleness, of demonstrativeness and protection. If the Holy Scriptures speak of the reverence due to husbands, they speak as strongly of the great love and tenderness which men ought to give to their wives. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter towards

them" (Col. iii. 19). "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it. . . . . So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ does the Church. . . . . Nevertheless, let every one of you, in particular, love his wife as himself, and let the wife fear her husband" (Eph. v. 25).

The words of this last passage, in which the Apostle admonishes men that they ought to nourish and cherish their wives "as their own bodies," describe, in every eloquent words, the right which a woman has to care and protection from her husband. She has a right to be protected from all roughness and violence, either of deed or word, from whatever quarter it may be threatened, as far as her husband's power goes. If he is bound to protect his wife against violence and insult from others, still more plainly is it his duty to abstain from violence or rough usage himself. The bad treatment of wives by their husbands is one of the worst blots on Christian society, and one of the most unpardonable and disgraceful crimes that men can commit. When a man beats, or insults, or half starves his wife, by spending his earnings on himself, and leaving her unprovided, he is not only doing a cruel and unmanly thing, but is sinning in a most flagrant manner against the first duties of his state.

I have said so much about the rights of both parties, because all real agreement and peace must be founded in justice; but there is abundant room for charity also. It would clearly be impossible for people to do their duty in the marriage state by thinking of justice only; there is also a constant need of charity. Justice and charity, however, are not opposed, as people sometimes think. Charity does not mean forgetting your own rights or giving them up. It is not real charity which makes people give up the proper authority and position which God has given them. For example, if a husband gives up his proper place as leader and guide, out of affection to his wife, and allows himself to be put in a subordinate position—it is not charity, but weakness. It is not charity, because it is contrary to the real good of both parties to be thus placed in a false and unnatural position. In the same way, it is not charity if a wife allows herself to be passed over in her own house, and to be degraded from her proper rank as mistress of the house. If she yields to her husband in every thing, right or wrong, wise or foolish, without remonstrance, she ceases to be the counsellor and support of her husband, and becomes simply his slave. To yield in this way is not charity, because it is *not* for her hus-

band's real good, but is the worst possible thing for him, as well as for herself.

Real charity is shown in that gentle, yielding spirit, which makes people forbearing and considerate in the assertion of their strict right, and ready to yield wherever it is really desirable to do so. Charity makes husbands and wives anxious for each other's happiness; it makes them study each other's feelings and wishes, and take all possible pains to avoid wounding or hurting each other. "Charity is patient, is kind." It is the virtue which keeps married people from little foolish quarrels, or, if it cannot always do that, it, at any rate, prevents them, even when angry, from saying or doing hard things which will not easily be forgotten.

Charity, moreover, makes them ready to forgive offences, and makes up differences, and is besides shown in married life by a large-hearted and generous interest in all that concerns the other party. You cannot have a real love for any one without being interested in all that is dear to your friend, and this applies very strongly to the case of married people. If a woman's love for her husband is not a mere selfish feeling she will have some room in her heart for those who are dear to him, and a desire to be on cordial and intimate terms with them. You find women who at once set themselves against their husband's families, and seem determined to keep them, as far as possible, at a distance. Sometimes they are not contented with this, but do their best to bring about misunderstandings and quarrels, and are not satisfied till they have estranged their husbands from their own nearest and dearest relatives. Nothing can be farther from real love than conduct like this. It is not love at all; it is only a mixture of selfishness and jealousy.

There is the greatest possible scope for charity, as well as for discretion and good judgment, in all your relations with the family of your husband or wife. You must have, in the first place, a real and honest desire to get on well and cordially with them, and then the charity and forbearance requisite to avoid giving or taking offence, and the still greater charity necessary, easily and pleasantly, to get over all the little difficulties which may arise.

With all the care that man can use, unhappy marriages will sometimes occur. Men and women take each other "for better, for worse," and sometimes the conduct of one party may be the severest of earthly trials to the other. Then, indeed, does the husband or wife need charity, and charity of a heroic description —and not only charity, but patience, to take up the cross, and courage to go on always trusting in God. No amount of bad

conduct on either side will, as you know, my dear brethren, ever break the solemn tie which binds the parties together, and it is their duty to make the best of it, however hard the case may be.

The duty of a Christian, under these sad circumstances, is a painful but a simple one. He is bound always to remember the nature of the bonds which unite him to his partner, and the obligations which those bonds entail. But charity wants a good deal more of you than this. You must go on always keeping up an interest and a concern in your erring husband or wife, no matter what has divided you. Who shall reclaim a man if his own wife forgets him, and shuts her heart against him? What chance has he in this life if she turns against him? How many a bad or weak man has, at last, been reclaimed by a faithful wife! This is indeed the crowning triumph of charity. But even if there is no hope of doing much for redemption in this world there is always the hope of doing something for the world to come by patience and charity. St. Paul says: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband" (I. Cor. vii. 14). If he could say this even when speaking of pagans and idolaters, how much more hope is there that the charity of the believing husband or wife may do good amongst Christians!

It is not only in these cases, however, that there is great need or charity. When sickness and old age come upon us we shall certainly be a great burden to somebody, and it is precisely this burden which married people mutually undertake. It is therefore one of the most serious duties of their state to help each other in sickness of mind or body.

It will, of course, very often happen that attendance like this is irksome and painful in itself, and involves a great deal of self-sacrifice. You cannot do your duty to a sick husband or wife without giving up your own inclinations and amusements, and doing a great many things which are unpleasant to you.

And now I come to the last great work of charity. You have bound yourselves together "till death do part you," and some day or other death has to come to announce that parting. When the last sickness comes, and the last separation is at hand, then it is that the tenderness and love of husband and wife must be shown. It is your care and your duty to smooth that last and painful passage for the partner of your life. It is the time for a good husband or wife to be forgetful of self, and to do all that man can do to alleviate the pain, to support, to comfort, and cheer the last hours of his suffering companion.

But all physical and material comfort will be of very little

avail, and will be but a miserable assistance in the hour of death, unless your help extends also to the preparation for eternity. Your marriage was meant to enable you to attain your last end and work out your salvation, and the bond that has united you in life is but a trifling thing, if you do not look forward to renewing that fellowship, and some day coming together before the throne of God, to thank Him for all that your earthly union has done for you.

Who can tell how much influence a faithful husband or wife can exert at that last hour? Take, for instance, a loving wife beside the death-bed of her husband—how much is in her power? She can suggest devout thoughts, and gently lead his mind to good, and she can help him to look forward and upward, and to forget the pains of the moment in the hope of a happy eternity. She can help him to place his trust in God, and to be resigned to His will, and penitent for his sins; she can suggest to him, better than any one else, to be patient in suffering, and to unite all the distress and pain of a last illness to the sufferings of our Lord upon the cross.

All this, however, will be very little unless she also takes pains to procure for him the consolations of religion. We sometimes see people who are so foolish that they will never admit, even to themselves, that those they love are in danger of death, or else are so afraid of shocking and distressing them that they will not give their friends any warning of the danger they are in, or of the need they have of receiving the last sacraments. A fine sort of friendship and tenderness is this—to risk the eternal salvation of those dear to you because you are too selfish or too timid to give a word of warning in due season!

The greatest care, then, of every good husband and wife ought to be to secure that the sacraments shall be administered to the dying without fail and without delay, and to do their own part in making preparation for these sacraments.

And when the last comes, and nothing else can be done, at least there is prayer; and we are quite sure that God, who is always ready to hear the prayers of His creatures, will not fail to give effect to the supplications of a faithful husband or wife, asking for mercy by the death-bed of the one dearest in life.

And now, my dear brethren, I have spoken at some length of the duties of the marriage state, and it only remains to consider how great is the crown which the sacrament of Matrimony bestows on all those husbands and wives who really understand and conscientiously perform the duties of the holy state they have embraced.

All society is a debtor to them—a debtor to them for the

children whom they send forth for its strength and ornament—a debtor for the great good that husband and wife can do, even with small means, if they act zealously together for the good of their brethren. The Church is a debtor to them for training up her children, and doing a work in them which no other could effect. God Himself is a debtor to them, since they have taken upon themselves the office which is the image of His creative power—the office of raising up children to Him, and training them to give glory to their Creator.

Listen to the words of that blessing with which Holy Church dismisses them when they enter upon their career: "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and Himself fulfil His blessing upon you; that you may see your children's children unto the third and fourth generation, and have everlasting life without end, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

SERMON LI.

Parents and Children.

"And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" (St. Luke xi. 11).

WHEN our Lord would lead His Disciples to rely with confidence on the mercy of God, He appeals, as a most convincing proof, to the natural tenderness of a father's heart, and says: "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask Him?" Paternal affection is so deeply rooted in man's nature that any parent who is cruel to his own children is looked upon by every one as a monster, and all mankind rise up against him. What father would give his children a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish?

When we come, however, to providing the food for the soul and the understanding then it is very different; and we, unfortunately, find a good many who give a stone for bread, if they do not even give the serpent instead of the fish, by providing poison in place of nourishment.

A parent's duty to his children is very simple in itself—to love his children, to take proper care of them, to educate them, and to start them properly in life. All this seems very easy; but a great deal is contained in these few words, which people do not always see. You have to love your children; but loving does not merely mean making pets or playthings of them. It does not consist in fondling, and kissing, and calling them pretty names; if it did, there would be no need, perhaps, to say anything about it. All these endearments are natural and very well in their way, but they are *not* love, and are quite consistent with *want* of love. These things are mere instinct, and are nothing, sometimes, but self-love, and experience shows us, only too often, that many mothers who are always fondling their children, and many fathers who make playthings of them in the most endearing fashion, are really their children's worst enemies.

Real love contains a great many things. Besides mere tenderness, it means patience and forbearance—it means watchfulness and taking trouble—it means, above all, self-sacrifice. You must have for your children an intelligent love—that is, a love which looks anxiously to the real good of its object, and does not expend itself in mere outward display of affection.

"Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely . . . . seeketh not her own" (I. Cor. xiii. 4). These words tell you what parental love should be like. It must be patient and kind, and not self-seeking. The very first essential is patience and forbearance, for without them all the tenderness in the world will not be of much use. It constantly happens that irrevocable evil both to body and mind results to children from the impatience of their parents; these parents have plenty of love, or think they have, but they have no forbearance, and they say and do in a moment things which have an ill effect on their children for their whole lives. Impatience like this occasionally results in injuries of body, but much more frequently is the harm done to the soul and disposition of their children. A sense of injustice and caprice, and a confusion of right and wrong, are often enough occasioned in children simply by want of temper and forbearance on the part of their parents. "And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger" (Eph. vi. 4).

To patience must be joined watchfulness. You are not to be forbearing by simply not seeing the faults of your children, or persuading yourself that they are not faults, but by watching and waiting to see how they may be best corrected. It is very easy to shut your eyes; the difficulty is to keep them open, and still to be patient and forbearing.

"But while men were asleep his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way" (St. Matt. xiii. 25). This is the explanation of a great many of the evils that arise in the world, and it is especially true of the education of children. When their parents were not looking—when they had relaxed the proper vigilance which they were bound to exercise over their children—the enemy came and oversowed cockle, and the good seed was choked up and perished.

It is your duty, therefore, to be always watchful in the care of your children. It is not enough to look after them at certain times, when, for example, they are in your presence, or are engaged in their studies; you must be watchful over them at all times, quite as much during their hours of play as when they are engaged in serious duties. This does not mean that you must always keep them in sight, or never allow them any reasonable liberty, and it does not mean that you are always to be interfering with everything they say or do; but it means that you are to take pains to find out the company they keep, the way they behave to each other and to strangers, the nature of their employments and amusements, the sort of ideas and habits they are forming, and so forth.

All this can be done without over restraint or harshness.

Those who wish to get any real knowledge of their own children must take care not to be too severe with them, even when in fault; they should try to win the children's confidence by gentleness and patience, instead of frightening them away with sternness.

I ought, first, to speak of those parents who, instead of educating their children, positively injure them, and teach them evil by precept or example. I will, however, treat of this part of the subject on some other occasion, and now proceed to consider more in detail the duty of parents in the education of their children.

One great object of family life is to provide that the young should be properly educated—that is, prepared for the place they will have to fill in after life. Of their very nature, all children need instruction, and God has made your their parents, and given you authority over them, chiefly that you, who know better, may teach them, and that you, who are stronger, may guide them.

A good education is generally the greatest part of what parents have to give to their children—very often almost the whole of what they can give; and, as a rule, the future that awaits their children is, to a great degree, dependent upon the training they have received.

In spite of all these considerations, however, you will find plenty of people who profess to love their children, and yet are utterly careless about the sort of education they give them; and this is true, not only of the very poor people, but of a good many who have abundant means of bringing up their children well, if only they chose to make use of them.

I should like here, my dear brethren, to notice a sort of excuse which people make to themselves—which you, I dare say, have heard a great many times. Fathers and mothers sometimes try to throw the responsibility of their children's education upon other people. They say: "I have got a good governess (or master), whom I pay well, and I cannot be expected to do any more: I cannot pretend to look after the children myself;" or a mother will say: "I leave all the charge of the children's education to their father—it is for him to attend to it;" or it may be the other way on; and a man will say: "I make it a rule never to interfere with my wife's management. Everything that concerns the children's education I leave to her, and should not think of interfering with her arrangements." This is all very well; but these good people forget to ask themselves: Has any man, or any woman either, a right to abdicate the position which Almighty God has given him, and shirk its

responsibilities? If God has made you the father of a family, are you at liberty to put off your responsibility on to the shoulders of *any* one, even of your wife? God has given to children fathers and mothers, that *both* may contribute, according to the powers which they each possess, to the proper training of their children.

People sometimes give themselves credit for great amiability of character for this sort of thing. They persuade themselves that they are generous and yielding, unwilling to press for their rights, and so forth: perhaps, however, if they were to take a deeper and more intelligent view of their conduct, they might come to think that it ought rather to be called weakness, and supineness, and neglect of duty.

Of course, I do not mean that parents must do the whole work of education themselves. They may, and ought, to get every possible assistance that their position will allow. In the nature of things they cannot, as a rule, undertake the whole; and they must find teachers to supply for what they are unable to do themselves. It does not, however, follow that they are to give up the responsibility which belongs to them. Whoever may assist in the education of the children, the parents themselves must always have a most important share, and without their co-operation the education will always be insufficient.

Education means a great deal more than mere knowledge and attainments; it means principles and habits of mind, cultivation of affections, and a good many more things, without which mere information is not sufficient.

There is a great part of this education which a child must receive from its parents. If they neglect their duty, and fail to do their part, it is probable that no one else will ever be able to supply the deficiency. There are many things which must be taught in infancy, and which can only be adequately taught by those who have the supreme and tender authority which parents possess by the law of nature.

For instance: the knowledge of God and of His love, the first ideas of religion and duty, the idea of the value of your soul—where are all these things to come from? They ought to come to you as little children; not in the form of catechism—that comes after—but in the shape of ideas and feelings which take possession of a child's mind as soon as it is able to receive any impressions at all. It stands to reason that parents alone have the power of planting those first seeds, which ought afterwards to bear good fruit. It is easy to find teachers who can inculcate the Christian doctrine as a lesson; but if the parents have allowed the early seed time to pass, there is not much hope of

an abundant harvest. So it is with the practice of prayer, the habit of devotion and piety, the feeling that prayer is a great duty; who can inculcate these things with the same effect as a child's own parents, at the time when their least word should be all-powerful? You find some people who are quite contented to leave things like this to their teachers, or servants, or anybody else, rather than take any trouble with them themselves. Do you think that the children will not soon observe how little interest their parents take in such things?

Besides these duties to God, there are many other primary virtues which, as a rule, parents alone can effectually teach. People fancy that all these things come of themselves; but it is not so. It is true, of course, that there are virtuous and good dispositions in children, but there are other contrary dispositions as well. The object of education is to foster the good and eradicate the evil of human nature. It is necessary to teach children to be truthful, and honest, and diligent, and to practise many virtues from childhood. This has to be done by putting good before them, and explaining it carefully—by removing the perplexities of childhood, by fostering and encouraging the weak, untrained mind in good, and firmly but gently repressing what is evil.

Take, for instance, the vice of lying. How often do people fall into this fault because as children they were never taught or encouraged to speak the truth? Their parents never troubled themselves to put before them the beauty and excellence of truth, or encouraged them to speak it at all risks. It is naturally a difficult virtue for the weak and young, and it is for their parents to aid them, by precept and example, in acquiring it.

Very often parents actually lead or drive their children into lying. Sometimes this is done by violence of temper and over-severity, which frightens them into lying; sometimes it is by over-strained notions of truthfulness, or by being over credulous. Some people will never believe that their children can tell lies, and, accordingly, never take the trouble to find out whether they are speaking truthfully or not; or, perhaps, through weakness, they fail to reprove or check them if they are untruthful. What is this but teaching them to lie?

It is the same thing with honesty. You find good fathers and mothers, sometimes, who are shocked at the bare possibility that their children could ever be dishonest. Plenty of other children are dishonest, they know only too well; but they cannot believe it of their own, as if their children were not exposed to the natural temptation to covetousness just as much as the rest of the world. The consequence of this delusion is, that, instead of

being on their guard, and watching to check the first sign of such evil, they simply open the way to it by their carelessness, and, perhaps, by resolutely shutting their eyes to what all the rest of the world can see.

Another very important part of education consists in giving children good habits. If, for instance, you take no pains to teach your children to be diligent when young, do you not think they will feel the effects of it all their lives? If a child has grown up in habits of idleness—never taught to do anything—never expected to work, but allowed to spend his life in listless inactivity, he is not likely to turn out a hard-working, diligent man.

We often hear fathers and mothers making bitter complaints of their children—that they are idle, and will do no work for them; but it very often happens that this is the natural result of the foolish way in which they have brought them up. They never taught their children to work, or insisted upon their doing anything when they were young, and their trouble now is the just reward of their own neglect.

Education in first principles must begin from the beginning. Take an example from nature. The moment a child is born its education begins, and every day it learns something. It learns to use its limbs and exercise its senses; it learns to distinguish and compare objects, and to make the proper use of all the faculties and powers it possesses, and, by the time it has strength to make any important exertion of body and mind, the lesson is complete, and it begins life having thoroughly found out how to make use of its own powers.

Nature does not say, as some parents do, wait till the child has grown strong—it will be time enough then to begin its education; on the contrary, it takes care that every waking hour shall be used in learning and practising things which it would afterwards find it very hard to master.

It would be a very good thing if all parents would follow this example, and begin the education of their children from infancy; and if they would also imitate the gentle, tender, and patient way in which nature teaches. Nature does not give hard and formal lessons, but goes on unceasingly showing her pupils what they ought to do, and urging them to do it, so that they finish their schooling and learn their lesson from her without finding out that they have ever been at school at all.

I now come to another part of education. Many people find it very easy to get on with *quite* young children. As infants, they call forth all the instinctive tenderness which God has placed in the hearts of parents; their childish ways are pleasing

and attractive, and their parents can hardly make too much of them. By-and-bye, however, comes the time when they cease to be quite children, and are no longer playthings—the children are turning into boys and girls, with dispositions, characters, and thoughts of their own. Very often those same parents, who a little while ago were so tender and indulgent, so much given to fondling, now become harsh and distant with them. They will not take the trouble to understand their children's thoughts, and so are impatient of them, and find them troublesome.

This, however, is, in reality, one of the turning-points of life. A young mind is just coming into its inheritance, and is bewildered by all the novelties which come in its way, and is ready to grasp at direction of some kind. If its parents are ready to come down to its level, and enter patiently into its difficulties—if they will think its thoughts and realize its position, so as to be able to direct and organize the new mental kingdom, and place the young sovereign on his throne in peace —if I may use such a comparison—they are working out the most important part of education. If, on the other hand, they are hasty and scornful, and close the avenues to confidence—or, at any rate, do not seek for confidence—they have neglected a great opportunity, and, perhaps, prevented their children from ever having that reverence for them and trust in them which they would have had if their parents had become their guides and companions as well as their masters.

There is one other part of education on which I must now speak, which needs very special comment, and that is *discipline*. You may teach your children what you like, but you will have done very little if you have not impressed upon them a correct and sufficient idea of discipline. Discipline is the essential training of human nature, and all other learning is trifling as compared to it. The Holy Scripture says, "Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way" (Ps. ii. 12). The first principle of it is obedience—obedience to command, to begin with, and then obedience to law. If children, therefore, have not learned to obey their education is worth very little.

It is the duty of parents, then, to teach discipline and obedience to their children; and not only to *teach*, but to *enforce*. For this purpose Almighty God has entrusted to them the *right*, and the *power*, and the *duty* of enforcing obedience—that is, of using whatever severity and compulsion may be necessary to enforce it. A very little force, a very little correction, is almost always sufficient; and it is generally the fault or folly of the parents if

much severity is required ; but control, and control *enforced*, in some way or other, is, in the nature of things, an essential element of discipline.

Parents, therefore, before God have no option—they are strictly bound to make a proper use of the power put into their hands, and, if they do not, they are responsible for the evils that follow.

It is a grievous error—an error only too common at the present day—to suppose that parents are not bound to punish their children—that they ought not to do so—that it is cruel, and a violation of the rights and dignity of the children, and so forth. This is an error founded on most un-Christian principles, and one which threatens to be most disastrous both to families and to society.

You find a great many parents now-a-days who seem to have no idea of exacting obedience from their children. They will coax their children, and argue with them, and even bribe them, and do everything except the one obvious thing, which is to compel them to obey, because it is their duty. What is this but confounding the very first lesson which a child ought to learn as to what obedience means? Obedience is doing what you are told, *because* you are told. If children do not learn to obey their parents—that first natural obedience which is suggested and rendered easy by nature itself—how is it likely that they will ever show much obedience to any one else? How will they ever learn to obey men?—how will they learn to obey God? They may, perhaps, conform to the rules which they understand, and from which they see they cannot escape; but, as to the virtue of obedience, that is likely to be an unknown thing to them.

The chief difficulty of enforcing obedience arises from the selfishness and caprice of those who are charged with exercising authority. If parents are very stern and severe with their children out of selfish motives, because the faults which the children commit are troublesome to them, not because they are serious in themselves, they are no longer enforcing discipline, but are tyrants, using their power unjustly for their own ends.

Again, if parents correct their children without any sympathy —that is, without taking the pains to hear them, or endeavouring to enter their feelings, and see things in their point of view, their strictness is not likely to be beneficial. They will then be led by their carelessness and want of sympathy into acts of injustice, which may do the greatest possible harm.

It is obvious, moreover, that discipline must not be capricious. If you are one thing to-day and another to-morrow, if you are indulgent at one hour and severe at another; or, again, to take

a still worse form of caprice, if you are too kind to one child and too harsh to another, your discipline can have no good effect, but will probably do harm.

The most common way in which parents make it difficult, if not impossible, for themselves to obtain the obedience of their children is by putting off their training too long, and not enforcing obedience in proper time. If a gardener were to tell you that he meant to train a young plant in a particular direction, but that he intended to wait till it was an inch and a half thick, you would think him *very* foolish. You would tell him that it was obvious to common sense that if he waited so long he would never train his plant at all, or else would break it in doing so, or, at the best, that he would have to use great force to effect what he could now do with his finger and thumb. This, however, is precisely what a great many parents do. They allow the time to pass in which it would be perfectly easy to teach discipline; those years of childhood, when a word, or a touch, or even a look, would be enough to enforce obedience, if only they did their duty with firmness and common sense; and then they are very much surprised that their children cannot easily be taught to obey them when they have attained an age in which the will and passions have begun to assert themselves.

If children grow up with no idea of discipline—unruly, stubborn, and disobedient—it is a great misfortune to the children, and a source of unhappiness to their parents; but who is to blame?

Is it possible to find a more pitiable, and, at the same time, a more degrading spectacle than that of a mother who is driven to complain that her children despise her, and will not attend to a word that she says? She complains that by the time they are eight, or nine, or ten they have got past her control, and she can no longer have peace in her own house because they are so disobedient and masterful. Who is to blame? She neglected her duty whilst it was easy, and now has to pay the penalty of her neglect. She has sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind. It would be a good thing if this neglect of duty to their children brought nothing on the parents but sorrow and disgrace in this life; but who can tell what judgment the conduct of their children may hereafter bring on them? "I will raise up against Heli all the things I have spoken concerning his house; I will begin and I will make an end. For I have foretold unto him that I will judge his house for ever for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them" (I. Kings iii. 12).

If I might conclude with a word of practical advice, I should say to all parents: Do not be afraid to punish your children if they deserve it; it is your duty, and they will love you none the less for performing it. Do not let your children become your masters, either by obstinacy or by fretfulness; how common a thing it is for children to get all they want if they will only cry for it long enough! Do not threaten what you do not mean to perform, or give commands if you do not intend to enforce them; and, finally, do not even allow your children to use rude or impertinent language to yourselves or others, but teach them, from the beginning, to treat with proper respect all who are older than themselves.

It is in vain for you to urge your children to be good if you are wicked yourselves. You must go before them, and show them the way, to use the Scripture simile, "as the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them," and then all your teaching will produce abundant fruit for you and for them; fruit for this life, and fruit for the life to come. Amen.

SERMON LII.

Schools.

"They did not find the way of knowledge, therefore did they perish' (Baruch iii. 27).

THERE are, my dear brethren, in this world numbers of people who are wandering from the way of salvation, and in great danger of perishing, because they have never found the way of knowledge. If we ask what is the reason why so many go astray we shall find, in a vast number of cases, that it is the result of a bad education. It is not always so, for the corruption of human nature, and the effects of free will, display themselves in spite of any education; yet it is true that a great many perish because they have been badly brought up.

It is a very sad thing to see the children of good and devout parents turning out badly, and becoming a disgrace and affliction to the Holy Church by their conduct. When this happens, we cannot but think that there must have been a fatal mistake somewhere in the way in which they were educated.

I have already spoken of early training and the inculcation of first principles. This is the foundation; but it is not enough. Parents are bound, if they are able, to give their children a complete education, to fit them for their state of life, that, as St. James says, "they may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing" (St. James i. 4).

Education is most important in itself, and important because those who are deficient in it are placed at a terrible disadvantage. If we want our children to hold their own with others of their age and station, it is absolutely necessary to take care that they are at least as well educated as their neighbours.

Parents are guilty of a very great injustice to their children if they do not give them all the reasonable opportunities in their power to gain the knowledge necessary to fit them for their state of life. If a father neglected his children, and gave them insufficient food, so that they never reached their full bodily strength and stature, all the world would cry shame on him; but this is just what he is doing, in another way, if he keeps his children from school, so that they are behind others of their own rank.

Your very first duty, in the education of your children, is to bring them up good Catholics. If you do not do this, then, indeed, you are the father spoken of by our Lord, who, when his child asks for bread, gives him a stone; and, for fish, gives him a serpent. It is quite clear that ignorance of the true faith, and of the means of salvation appointed by God, is a terrible misfortune. If you, by your carelessness, have involved your children in this misfortune, you have been guilty of a great act of injustice against them, and a great sin before God.

St. Paul says: "If a man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. v. 8). If a man neglects his own in such an important matter as this, he is worse than an infidel—he is a traitor to Almighty God. He is appointed to be the father, protector, and guide of his children, expressly that he may teach them God's law; and if he does not do this it is an act of treason against Him from whom his authority is derived. "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify to you this day, which you shall command your children to observe and to do, and to fulfil all that is written in this law. For they are not commanded you in vain, but that every one should live in them" (Deut. xxxii. 46); "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising" (Deut. vi. 6).

In words like these Almighty God commanded the Jews to teach His laws to their children. They were to consider the religion which He had taught them the greatest of all their treasures, and the one which it was most important to hand on to their offspring. That law, after all, was but a figure of the "good things to come," a type of that higher covenant and more perfect means of grace which God has given to us. The duty of teaching His law, which God imposed on them, must, therefore, be binding on Christians in a much stricter way. You may think that it is quite unnecessary to speak of the duty of educating children in the true faith, because it might be supposed *impossible* for Catholic parents to do otherwise. It is true that Catholic parents very seldom profess to bring their children up as any thing but Catholics, but, unfortunately, they often do so, in fact—that is, they allow them to frequent Protestant schools, and to come under Protestant influences, so that they never really become Catholics.

There are two reasons or excuses for laxity of the kind. The first is a very poor one—that is, the hope of gain or worldly advantage, either for themselves or their children. The parents

imagine that if they send their children to some particular school they will be likely to get on better in the world. A Protestant school seems to them of a higher class, or "more respectable," and they think their children will be more thought of if they go there, and, perhaps, be better taught, and make more useful friends.

This is, indeed, a very paltry motive. It is clear that no worldly consideration, not to speak of the very small advantages which are to be obtained in this way, will, in any degree, make up to the children for tampering with their faith. It is, indeed, an insult to God to talk about worldly advantages on such occasions.

There is, however, another reason which sometimes induces parents to be more lax than they should be in insisting upon the Catholic education of their children. It is when, unfortunately, the parents differ in religion. In the present state of things mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants cannot be avoided sometimes, and from these painful difficulties often arise as to the education of the children. Many fathers and mothers, who would be staunch and true to their principles in all other cases, allow themselves to be over-persuaded by considerations of kindness and affection. I must say a few words on this subject, although it is a difficult one to treat.

It seems, at first sight, very hard, my dear brethren, that the Church should insist, as it does, that all children of such marriages, both boys and girls, should be brought up Catholics. People sometimes say that this is a very arbitrary proceeding, and that, by making such a law, we ignore the rights of others, and disregard their consciences.

This, however, is not the case. Such marriages are only made on the supposition that the other party has no positive *objection* to the Catholic faith.

There are a great many people in this country who cannot indeed see their way to becoming Catholics, who, nevertheless, are tolerant of the Catholic faith. On any other supposition a mixed marriage would be something horrible. Nothing can be conceived, for instance, more repugnant to all Christian feeling, than that a woman should contract marriage, hating the religion of her husband, thinking it idolatry, and so forth. If she has such a conscientious objection as this, she clearly has no business to get married to him.

We have a perfect right to assume, then, that the Protestant husband or wife at the time of marriage knows what the claims of the Catholic Church are, and is, at any rate, tolerant of that claim, and it is on this supposition that the marriage is allowed.

The Church, therefore, requires a distinct promise from the Protestant party to the wedding that all children shall be Catholics, not because she disregards the rights of the Protestant father or mother, or wishes these to go against the dictates of conscience, but because she takes it for granted that they have no strong objection to the Catholic faith, and see no difficulty in making the promises required.

If they cannot do so, then the marriage ought not to go on, as it cannot be contracted without sin. When the promise has once been made, and the marriage has been celebrated, it is clear that the husband or wife who has made the promise cannot retract it. They have given up their right as to the religious education of the children; and, if they resume it, they are guilty of injustice to those husbands and wives who contracted marriage on the strength of their promises.

It is quite clear, also, that the Catholic party is bound to *insist* on the promises made at the time of marriage. In other matters, where principle is not concerned, it is very well to be yielding and willing to give up your own way; but in a matter of duty like this, where the good of souls is concerned, you *cannot* relinquish your right. If you do so it is, as I said before, an act of treachery against God and an injustice to your children.

Every one who has paid any attention to the question must be aware that a Catholic cannot give way about the religion of his children without plainly violating the dictates of his conscience. On the other hand, it is *not* necessarily so with Protestants. A great many of them, in fact, have no sort of conscientious objection to allowing their children to be Catholics. Those who have such an objection ought not to marry Catholics.

Moreover, you must not be contented with making your children half Catholics. If you were to insist, for example, on their learning the Catholic Catechism, but did not take pains to see that they learned Catholic principles and ideas, and that their sympathies and feelings were Catholic, you would be making them half-Catholics. The consequences of such half measures are very disastrous to all concerned. Children brought up in this way may be Catholics in name, but too often are nothing at all in reality, and have lost all religious feeling because of their half-hearted education. Men do not go by reason alone, or by catechisms and truths formally taught, but require the assistance of sympathies, feelings, and associations in their religion, and if they are without these they are not very secure.

It is with a man's religion as it is with the mast of a ship. No

mast, however strong it may be in itself, will stand very long unless it is supported by the numberless small ropes which make up the rigging of the vessel. All these together help the spar to bear the strain of rough weather, and give it security in sudden tempest. So it is with the religious life of a Christian; he must have strong principles, good teaching, and true faith, but besides these he stands in need of the religious associations and sympathies taught in childhood, and without these the principles are in danger.

It is quite necessary, then, for parents in these circumstances to admit of no half measures with the children's religion; and, moreover, there must not be any delay about it. People sometimes delude themselves into thinking that the question will wait. "Why say anything about such an unpleasant subject whilst the children are so young?" This is a fatal mistake. Every year, I may say almost every day, adds to the difficulty. What could have been taught very easily a short time ago is, perhaps, a difficult matter now; and in a few years the evil will be done—an evil which you cannot repair, and which will very likely be a ground of remorse to you all the days of your life.

Parents have a very great power in the education of their children, but it is a power which must be used *at once*, or it slips out of their hands, and they struggle in vain to get it back again when once it has passed away. I cannot conclude this part of the subject without saying a word or two about the gentleness and consideration which are needed in the case of mixed marriages. You must do your duty; but you are bound, as carefully as possible, to avoid everything that can give offence or pain. You must carefully avoid anything which looks like insolence, or superciliousness, or an indifference to the feeling of others.

When difficulties arise between husband and wife in this matter, as well as in most other things, they do not generally come from the disagreeableness of the duty in itself so much as from the inconsistent, inconsiderate way in which it is done.

I now have to speak of school education. It very seldom happens that a sufficient and complete education can be given at home, so the choice of schools becomes a great consideration for most parents. It is, indeed, a serious anxiety, because a school is either the best, or the worst thing for a child. A good school is the greatest possible blessing that can be secured for children, and a really bad one is, without any doubt, the greatest misfortune.

First, let us consider the common case, in which it is necessary

for parents to send their children to live away from home—to boarding-schools. It is clear that it is their duty to take pains in choosing schools in which their children may be really well educated. The first thing is to ascertain that religion is properly and systematically taught. There are, unfortunately, a great many schools — even high-class schools — in which religious teaching is very imperfectly attended to. The teachers seem to think that adequate religious knowledge can be obtained without giving proper time and trouble to it; or else they cannot spare time from other studies. This is a great abuse and a mere pretence. As a rule, the schools in which religion is best taught are the most successful in other things.

It is a duty of parents to assure themselves, as far as they can, of the character and fitness of the teachers to whom they entrust their children, and of the morality and discipline of the school to which they send them. When they have ascertained this, however, something yet remains to be done. If the teachers are to do their part for the education of your children, you must do yours; and this is a thing not sufficiently thought of. In the first place, you must be willing to pay a fair price. A great many of the difficulties of education arise from want of liberality on the part of parents. They want their children to be educated almost for nothing. In other matters people do not expect to get good things at very low prices; if you are buying food or wearing apparel for yourself, you are prepared to pay reasonably for it, and do not grudge your money; but a great many people *do* grudge the proper price for their children's schooling; and, accordingly, many of our schools accept children at a charge which renders it impossible to provide good teaching.

Another very important thing for parents to remember, whilst their children are at school, is that they are bound to support the authority of those to whom they have entrusted their children. All the authority that any teacher has over his pupils is simply delegated by the parents; and, if the parents do not properly support the authority of their representatives, they are doing a great wrong, and rendering the education of their children impossible. You not unfrequently find parents appointing teachers over their children, but not willing to give them the necessary power to make their teaching successful. Is not this like telling them to make bricks without straw? Why do not these parents keep their children themselves and teach them, if they are able to do so? It is quite clear that any attempt to teach without the requisite authority and power must be a failure.

Some parents are always ready to listen to every trifling

grievance their children may have, or profess to have, and by so doing effectually set the children against their teachers; or, again, they fail to treat the teachers with proper respect themselves, and so destroy the influence they ought to have in order to succeed in the task entrusted to them.

The great bulk of our children, however, do not go to boarding-schools, but live at home, and only attend school for some hours every day. When this is the case, the conduct of the parents has the greatest possible effect on the education which the children receive. No teaching which is given in school can produce much good result, unless it is backed up by the co-operation of the parents at home. I must here speak of one of the difficulties which we have to encounter in this country. As Catholics are but a small body in most places, it is sometimes difficult for them to find schools of exactly the class they would wish. There is, perhaps, a deficiency, at present, of middle-class schools throughout the country. Fathers and mothers have, therefore, in many cases, to choose between sending their children to schools which do not, in all respects, suit them, and sending them to Protestant schools, or schools where no religion at all is taught. There are a great many schools, at the present time, which, at first sight, seem to offer great temptation. In the Board Schools, for instance, everything is done on a very grand scale, quite regardless of expense, with a great show of liberality, which to many people is very attractive. It very often, therefore, is a question of choosing between pride and religion, and this choice is a great temptation to many people. It is plain that nothing but a case of *real* necessity can ever justify them in sending their children to schools where their own faith is not taught. Such cases of necessity do arise. When people are living at a distance from a Catholic school, they *must* send their children to some other school—because the law requires it, and they have no other means of providing education. In these cases they may trust to supplying the religious teaching of their children in some other way; but, ordinarily speaking, it is obvious that they have no right to expose their little ones to so great a danger of losing their faith.

If you send children to such schools it is almost certain that they will never get a proper and sufficient knowledge of their religion. It is all very well for the parents to suppose that they can give the necessary instruction at home, or that the priest's instruction will be sufficient; but neither they themselves, nor the priest in such circumstances, can teach children effectually. The children, therefore, will leave school badly instructed in their religion—not only in the actual words and meaning of the

Catechism, but in all those Catholic ideas which children insensibly pick up at a good school. Children who are educated in the schools I have been speaking of, will not only be ignorant of their own religion, but they will certainly learn a great deal of irreligion. That, unfortunately, is a thing very easily taught. They will learn it indirectly from their teachers, and, probably, directly enough from their companions. Our Lord says: "He who is not with Me is against Me;" and every school which is not religious is pretty sure to be irreligious in spirit; and every school which is not Catholic is sure to be anti-Catholic in tone.

What right have parents to bring up their children without a proper knowledge of their own faith, and to expose them to the danger of irreligion, and of the immorality which is tolerably sure to follow from it, simply to gratify their own pride? It is, indeed, a very poor sort of pride, and one which Catholics of all classes and stations should join in reprobating, because it is a serious injury, not only to the individual children who suffer, but to the religious interests of the whole Catholic body.

When there is a real and plain necessity for sending children to "undenominational" schools, it is then the duty of the parents to supply the religious education which is wanting. This must be done by regular, systematic teaching, and requires a great deal more time and trouble than people generally suppose.

I have now to mention some of the points to which parents must attend if they want their children to profit by their schooling.

The first is regularity. Our schools suffer terribly from the irregularity of the parents in sending their children to school. Sometimes they keep them away for all sorts of foolish reasons; sometimes they will send them to school after the proper school hours have begun. I suppose they do not understand the great injury done to their children, and to the school they attend, by this want of regularity. The very beginning of all education is discipline—learning that certain duties have to be done at certain times, and that they *must not* be omitted.

This is the first lesson the children should learn; only, unfortunately, their parents are teaching them exactly the contrary by keeping them away on every foolish pretence. Very soon the children learn to improve upon their father's and mother's teaching. The parents keep them away a good many days for their convenience, and the children soon stop away a good many more for their own amusement, and so a habit of irregularity is established.

It often requires much self-denial and firmness on the part of the parents to send their children regularly to school, especially

as they grow older. It seems very hard not to keep them at home when they can be useful and are wanted; but you must remember that, if you do, your children will never receive their proper education.

It is very important for the welfare of the children that they should not be taken away from school too early. It is a great temptation to parents to remove their children if they see a chance of getting them into place, and so lightening their own burden. On the other hand, the last year, when young people are old enough to understand what they are doing a little better, is often the most valuable time for their studies; and if you deprive them of it, they will never get over the loss in after life. It is, moreover, very bad for the children to be sent to work too early before they are fit for it, and they are very likely to receive harm in body and soul from leaving school too soon.

I have already spoken of the part which parents must take in the education of their children by upholding the authority of those who have to teach them. This applies, of course, most of all, to the case of day-schools. It is impossible for any one to teach children if their parents are foolish enough to interfere. Some people have always got a grievance or complaint about the manner in which their children are treated at school; they pay attention to every foolish story they hear, and thereby encourage their children to tell tales about their teachers, and then they think themselves called upon to intefere. Such a line of conduct makes it impossible to educate children. It is sufficiently difficult, under any circumstances; but if boys and girls are encouraged in their opposition to authority by their own parents, it becomes impossible.

Sensible people never interfere with their children at school—or, at any rate, never let it be *seen* that they interfere—unless in an extreme emergency; but do their best to support authority. The result of this is that their children are easily taught, and so they get the best education possible.

Of course, parents must always be on the look-out to see that their children are properly treated and taught, that the school suits them, and that they are sufficiently happy there. All this, however, can be done without any appearance of interfering with the authority of the teacher, and without encouraging the children to make complaints and find grievances.

When school education is finished, there is only one thing remaining, and that is for parents to give their children a fair start in life. As I said before, the object of education is to fit young people to take their proper place in the world, and the parents ought to help them to find a suitable place. There is,

however, one thing to be considered. It is very hard for parents to recognize that their children are growing up, and are no longer boys and girls. They sometimes, therefore, fail to see that these children, who were so absolutely under their command a few years ago, are now old enough to claim their rights as young men and women.

If parents are only wise enough to give to their children the consideration and liberty which their advancing age makes reasonable, they continue to have an influence over them in after life. If, however, they treat them as children too long, it is sure to end in discord and trouble.

And now, my dear brethren, I have said enough about the duties of parents in educating their children, and have, perhaps, gone into detail more than is usually done in sermons. The details differ in each family, but the principles are the same; and what I have said will apply, with very little change, to most families.

It only remains to say once more how very important the the work of education is for the good of society, and also for happiness both of parents and children, since the Holy Scripture says: "A wise son maketh the father glad: but a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother" (Prov. x. 1).

SERMON LIII.

Servants.

"The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister" (St. Matt. xx. 28).

OUR Blessed Lord, my dear brethren, came down upon earth "to seek and to save what had perished," and to effect this He deigned to become the servant of men. He took the "form of a servant" and came amongst us, "not to do His own will," but to spend His life in ministering to men. He began His life, therefore, in servitude in the Holy House of Nazareth, and spent many years in subjection. "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51). His missionary life was one long servitude, in which He gave His time and His labour to men, and gave up His own will and His own ease to go after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When the end of His course was at hand He set up the same example of humility. "He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments, and, having taken a towel, girded Himself. After that He putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His Disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded" (St. John xiii. 4).

In all this our Lord meant to set us an example, and, if possible, to reconcile us to that which must inevitably be our lot—and that is, to being servants. Nothing is harder for human nature than servitude, and from the beginning to the end men have struggled against it. "Of old times thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst: I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). Rebellion against authority and hatred of submission are the original sin of the human race, and it was to cure this evil that our Lord embraced a life of servitude. It is in vain for men to try and escape from obedience, for, in the nature of things, it is the lot of the immense mass of mankind. How very few are *not* servants in one shape or another! Sometimes in one way, and sometimes in another, all men have to serve. It may be as servants to one man, or it may be as servants to a great many masters; but in some way or other almost every human being has to be a servant. As the Holy Scripture tells us: "Great labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming out

of their mother's womb unto the day of their burial into the mother of all . . . . from him that sitteth on a glorious throne unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes" (Ecclus. xl. 1).

It was to encourage us to bear with this lot, and to ennoble it for us, that our Lord assumed the form of a servant. His example points out to us that the service of God is the greatest honour which men can have. Slavery of itself is an evil and a disgrace to man, but everything done for God's service is honourable. If you are working for God, no matter how poor or how menial your work is, it is, nevertheless, the highest honour you can enjoy. If you are simply working for men, and giving up your will to them, waiting upon them, and doing their bidding, although they are no better than yourself, there is something ignominious in your work; but, once make what you have to do, the service of your Creator, and you turn all the fetters into gold, since to serve God is to reign.

It does not much matter what sort of master upon earth we serve—whether we are servants decked out in purple and fine linen, and dependent upon the will of a great many masters, as are many of the great people of the earth, or whether we serve one individual master—it is in either case a real servitude, and we must do the will of others, not our own. Our Lord, therefore, humbled Himself by becoming a servant, in order to show us how to turn our servitude into true liberty, by making it the service of God.

He came amongst us, moreover, to give us a motive for bearing patiently the labours and mortifications which obedience sometimes brings with it. We may consider ourselves as fellow-labourers with Jesus Christ, and always look on Him as working with us and sharing our toil. If we do this even the hardest and most disagreeable service in the world would become easy, and the humblest position would be honourable in our eyes. We see examples of this in the joy with which the saints embraced the humblest and most revolting employments for the love of God. St. Vincent de Paul, for example, did not hesitate to go as a slave amongst the Moors for the redemption of those who had been taken prisoners by them, and considered all the hardships he had to endure most honourable, because he was doing it for the love of Christ and after His example.

The first kind of service of which I have to speak—though a few words will be enough—is the obedience we owe to the State. You cannot be a good Christian unless you are also a good member of society and a good subject to the Queen. Nothing can be set down more clearly in the Holy Scripture than this. St. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for

there is no power but from God, and those that are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist purchase to themselves damnation" (Rom. xiii. 1). Again, he tells St. Titus to "admonish them to be subject to princes and powers, to obey at a word, to be ready to every good work" (Tit. iii. 1). St. Peter says: "Be subject, therefore, to every human creature, for God's sake; whether it be to the king, as excelling; or to governors, as sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of the good: for so is the will of God, that, by doing well, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I. St. Peter ii. 13).

All power comes from God, and we are bound to obey the civil government under which we find ourselves placed as a matter of conscience, because it is the will of God. "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." Christians are obliged therefore to do their duty by the State—to avoid all open rebellion or secret conspiracy, and to take their fair share of the duties of good subjects. The Catechism tells us that it is sinful to belong to any secret society that plots against the Church or State, or to any society that, by reason of its secrecy, is condemned by the Church; and our Lord Himself gives us the same lesson in the words: "Render therefore to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's."

We must remember moreover that the government under which our Lord and the Apostles lived were very hard and stern governments; their words therefore do not leave much excuse for those who are impatient and rebellious under every trifling cause of complaint.

I now go on to speak of service in its more ordinary acceptation—that is, of those who are commonly called servants, because they are engaged in domestic service. First, consider the importance of their state of life: it was from the beginning, before trades, or clerkships, or manufactures. It is a sort of employment which is most natural of all, and comes from the very constitution of society. It, moreover, brings different ages and ranks of men together on terms of great intimacy.

It is very important to treat carefully of the duties of servants, because, as I have said, the great bulk of mankind are, in some sense or other, servants; and what I say will be applicable, in some degree, to most people; and, also, because the number of those who are engaged in service, properly so called, is immensely large. There are two sorts of duties which belong to servants generally. These are duties to their employers and

duties to their fellow-servants: in these two duties are summed all the obligations belonging to their state of life.

To begin with, service implies subjection. It stands to reason that all the good qualities which a servant might have would be of no use without the subjection which is the very essence of his state of life. Subjection means something more than mere formal obedience. When we are told that our Lord went down to Nazareth with His parents, and was *subject* to them, we understand that He put Himself under them, and humbled Himself, and chose to be dependent and submissive—all this is contained in the idea of subjection. Something of this kind—in a limited degree, and in reasonable things—is necessarily implied in the relation of master and servant. If you are not prepared honestly to give this submission and subjection for God's sake, you have no right to undertake the office of a servant. It is clearly part of the contract, not only that you are to obey certain formal commands, but that you are to be subject to those placed over you, and honestly to try to carry out their will in all lawful and reasonable things.

It is necessary to speak of this, because some seem to think that they are to serve indeed, but that they are to do it in their own way: that they have a right to judge what ought to be done, and when and how it should be done; and, in short, are constantly trying to make themselves masters instead of servants. They spend their lives in struggling to get their own way—in little things, at any rate—instead of honestly trying to do the will of those whom they pretend to serve. It is plain that this is quite contrary to the spirit and duty of their state.

It seems hard to speak of subjection, because the very idea of it is hateful to men at the present day; but the first element of peace is that men should clearly understand the principles and obligations of their state of life. The pride of human nature disposes us all to rebel against any such admission; but our Lord teaches us, both by precept and example, to love it, and to seek it as the safe way of peace. "Be ye, therefore, subject to every human creature for God's sake" (I. Peter ii. 13). "Being subject, one to another, in the fear of Christ" (Eph. v. 21).

Since our Lord and His saints *sought* after subjection we ought, at least, to be able to bear it when it is the duty of our state.

Next to the primary duty of obedience comes the duty of conscientiousness. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ: not serving to the eye,

as it were pleasing men, but doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. vi. 5). Conscientiousness is the one great thing that the world has a right to ask from all who profess to be Christians. Our very profession is that we are walking and acting in the presence of God, and referring our service to Him; if, then, we "serve to the eye," and do one thing when our superiors are looking, and another as soon as their backs are turned, the world may well scorn and despise us as hypocrites. If you can only keep in mind that your service is really service rendered to God, and that your subjection is for God's sake, and not for fear of men, then you will never "serve to the eye."

Conscientiousness is shown by diligence. If you are working to please God, and do your duty, you are pretty sure to do your best. Whatever you have to do, even if it is trifling and unimportant in itself, becomes important, and you do it as well as you can, if only you can bring yourself to look at it as something done for Almighty God. The great test of conscientiousness, however, of course, is honesty, and there are special reasons why those who are in service should be honest. They are bound to be honest by the ordinary rules of justice, as everybody else is, but they are specially bound, because their place is one of confidence. If you admit any one into your house you thereby place a trust in that person which is violated by any kind of dishonesty; and, therefore, you have a greater right to expect honesty from those in your own house than from strangers.

There are two sorts of dishonesty. One sort is when a servant appropriates, or makes away with, his master's property—that is plain enough; but there is another, which consists in waste of time. A great many good people never think of this, and have very little scruple in wasting the time of their employers. You are paid so much to give your work for so many hours; you take the money, and then give only *half* the time. What is that but dishonesty? Or, again, you are paid to do certain work in a house; you take the money, and you don't do the work, or only do half of it. A great many people, who would be very scrupulous over a few pence, think very little of being dishonest in the employment of their time, and the fulfilment of their engagements.

There is a special reason for speaking about honesty, because, in the nature of things, servants are exposed to peculiar temptations. Their temptations are *little* things. Who can be expected to be so particular about trifles? And yet it is these very trifles which are the danger, because those who are not quite honest in small things, are almost sure by degrees to become dishonest in

greater ones. It is very important for us all to be on our guard against dishonesty in trifling things, for the very reason that they look so insignificant, and are so dangerous; but this caution is specially necessary for those whose state of life puts them in the way of small temptations.

Servants are, besides, in common with a great many of other trades and professions, exposed to the danger of forming false consciences to themselves—that is, of persuading themselves, or half-persuading themselves, that wrong is right. They hear people call practices which really are dishonest by all sorts of softening names, till at last they come to think there is no great harm in them, and so blind their own consciences. This is a great danger, and one against which the Psalmist prays when he says: "Incline not my heart to evil words to make excuses in sin" (Ps. cxl. 4). If people would preserve their integrity, they must learn always to call things by their right names: to call stealing, stealing; and dishonesty, dishonesty; and not be persuaded to call them by pleasanter names, because such is the custom of those around them.

It may be said that it is sometimes difficult to know exactly what is honest: to know, for instance, when certain *perquisites*, and so forth, are really allowable and sanctioned by custom. The best guide is the question: Would you like to be found out? If you would *not*, you may be pretty sure that you are doing wrong.

There is another point to which servants, who desire to do their duty conscientiously, must attend: they must be careful of the characters of their employers. If you are admitted into any house as a servant, you are taken into confidence, and made acquainted with a number of things which other people know nothing about. This confidence is placed in you on the understanding that you will be faithful, and not talk about their affairs, and the little things that come under your notice in a way which would be disagreeable. If you tell tales, and gossip about all the private concerns of your employers, it is an abuse of the trust placed in you, and is a serious violation of the duty of your state of life.

Conscientiousness is to be shown, not only by honestly doing the work you have undertaken to do, but also by sincerity. It is difficult to be sincere and honest with those who are over us, and, at the same time, to show the respect that is due to them. Sometimes the temptation to insincerity comes in the shape of a disposition to flatter them, by agreeing in all their views, and encouraging them in all their faults.

The most common way, however, in which sincerity and up-

rightness are shown is by speaking the truth in spite of difficulties. Servants, more than most other people, are tempted to make excuses—to get out of small difficulties by telling little lies—or, rather, by telling lies about unimportant matters. This does not seem to some people as great a fault as it is. I shall have another opportunity of treating of the sin of lying in itself, but now I want to speak of it as it effects the particular state of life I am considering. Servants easily fall into the habit of making excuses: if they have neglected any work, they have some good reason to give why they couldn't do it—a good reason, only, unfortunately, not true: something has gone wrong, or some mischief has been done—it is the fault of some one else; and so they go on, never honestly admitting that they have been in fault, but always finding some little story or other to get out of the difficulty.

What good have they done by all this? Of course, in a very short time, every one knows that they are not to be believed; so the only result of all their cleverness is to destroy the confidence which ought to exist between them and their employers.

To render all other qualities complete you require charity and patience. People do not always recognize how necessary it is to have charity towards their employers. The relation of master and servant seems, at first sight, to bring with it a kind of natural opposition which is very unlike charity. This is, however, a very superficial feeling. The necessary effect of the Christian faith is to make us all brethren, and the little distinctions of class and employment disappear before the consideration that we are members of one body. For St. Paul tells us that: "As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, and having different gifts according to the grace that is given to us" (Rom. xii. 4).

It will be well to give here some of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures on the duties of servants. We must remember that service then was a very different thing from what it is now. Then it was a harsh, compulsory slavery, in which masters had almost unlimited power over their servants; now it is an agreement entered into for mutual benefit, in which you undertake certain obligations by your own free will, and are bound to fulfil them as a matter of justice.

See how the Apostles speak of the tie of brotherhood that unites master and servant, of the conscientious duty of obedience, and of the duty of mutual forbearance. What they say applies with much greater force at the present day, considering

the sort of bond by which different classes are united in modern times.

St. Peter says: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thanksworthy if, for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully" (I. St. Peter ii. 18). St. Paul again tells St. Titus to "exhort servants to be obedient to their masters in all things pleasing, not gainsaying; not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (St. Titus ii. 9). To the Colossians St. Paul says the same thing: "Servants, obey, in all things, your masters according to the flesh, not serving to the eye as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God. Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance. Serve ye the Lord Christ, for he that doth wrong shall receive for that which he hath done wrongfully: and there is no respect of persons with God. Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven" (Colos. iii. 22).

We have put before us very strongly in these texts the great principle which ennobles all obedience, and gives an adequate motive for perfect submission. It is the principle that in all that we do, if we do it properly, we are serving not men, but God. It would be a good thing, my dear brethren, if we all dwelt on these words. We all of us, as a rule, have to serve some one, and it is our wisdom and our duty to learn the spirit in which we should accept the yoke of obedience.

It is also important for servants to study their behaviour to their fellow-servants. We can do little in this life if we do not learn to get on with our equals and companions. It is common enough to find people who are excellent in their behaviour to those over them, but always have trouble with their equals.

The fact of being fellow-servants is a great bond of union, and ought to bring with it a feeling of kindness, and an anxiety to avoid anything harsh or likely to give pain. "And when that servant was gone out he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence, and, laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. . . . . Now, his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done" (St. Matt. xviii. 28).

You see, my dear brethren, our Lord lays great stress on the circumstance that the wicked servant treated so badly one who was his own fellow-servant, taking it for granted that every one

would feel that this ought to be a strong reason for gentleness and forbearance.

To come more particularly to the customs of the present day, and the duties arising from them, I would point out how much of the happiness and welfare of servants depends upon the good or bad behaviour of those of their own class. In a large household the good or bad treatment of the young people depends much more upon the care and consideration of the upper servants than it does upon their employers. If the servants choose to be cruel and inconsiderate towards each other, and tyrants over the helpless, it is very difficult for their superiors to interfere; so that an immense field for doing good is open to those who wish to make good use of the influence their position gives them. A kind and considerate upper servant, with good principles and a little zeal, can do good more effectively, in some respects, than any one else.

It just remains for me to say a word or two of the special dangers of the situation of life on which I have been dwelling. These are, to begin with, bad masters and bad fellow-servants—bad, that is, in being the occasions of sin. These sometimes constitute so great a danger that any one who cares for his salvation may be obliged to leave his situation at once, and at any cost. When it appears that a household is irreligious or immoral, that there is danger to your faith, or that you cannot attend reasonably well to your religious duties, you should look on the situation as an occasion of sin, from which you ought to escape as soon as possible.

There is another danger to which domestic service is exposed—it is the danger of self-indulgence. There are a great many who work very hard, and lead self-denying lives; but it is impossible to look round without seeing that a great many suffer in body and soul from yielding to the temptations of idleness and self-indulgence People excuse themselves in this, as in everything else: they are only following the usages of their class in eating and drinking, and doing what others do, and is expected of them. This is all very well; but, in spite of all excuses, you cannot be over-indulgent to yourself, and lead an idle life, without very great danger of leading a wicked one too.

I must conclude by one word of the great advantages of the state. As I said before, it was the great desire of the saints to carry out literally the teaching of the Apostle, and be "obedient to every human creature for God's sake," They were anxious to obey on all occasions, because the more implicit their obedience the better service it was to Almighty God. They looked upon obedience as the safest way to heaven: those who were

obedient, they thought, are in no danger of being led away by self-love, and, therefore, they would become as little children in obeying, remembering always our Lord's words: "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

So with you, my dear brethren; if God has placed you in a position of life where it is your duty to be obedient to others, to be subject, to give up your own will, you have, without effort, the very thing for which the saints longed. You are in a position in which everything you do can be made meritorious—in which all the common labours of life may be gilded, if I may say so, with the gold of obedience for Christ's sake. You are, besides, called to a state of life which affords abundant power of doing good, —of doing good to yourselves by self-denial and devotion, and good to others by the many opportunities thrown in your way. The way of obedience is also emphatically the safe way, and the way of peace; and if you will only strive to see our Lord working with you, as He once worked in the house of Nazareth—if you will only realize that in all things you are working for Him, you will find nothing too hard or trying for you, but will acknowledge that His "yoke is sweet, and His burden light," and you will "find rest for your souls" (St. Matt. xi. 29).

SERMON LIV.

Masters.

"If any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ" (I. St. Peter iv. 11).

ONE of the lessons which our Lord teaches us most emphatically in the Gospel is that we are all God's stewards. What is given to us in this world is not our own, but belongs to our Master, and we have to take care of it for Him, as "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." This, my dear brethren, is a lesson which most men find it very hard to learn, and very disagreeable to carry out into practice. Our Lord, therefore, puts it before us in many shapes. He compares men to the husbandmen in charge of a vineyard: "There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard and made a hedge round about it; and dug in it a press and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen; and went into a strange country. And when the time of fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof" (St. Matt. xxi. 33). Again He tells us of the unjust steward: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said to him: how is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer" (St. Luke xvi. 1). The vineyard let to the husbandmen, and the goods entrusted to the steward, are the different good things given by Almighty God to men. Health and strength of body and mind, talents and worldly position, wealth and all the influence it brings with it, and all the things that men enjoy and covert in this life are all things given by God—given for a time only—given for a particular purpose, and to be, some day or other, strictly accounted for.

Everything we possess is directly or indirectly the gift of God, since of ourselves we have absolutely nothing. "Who distinguisheth thee? or what hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (I. Cor. iv. 7). This is true just as much of what men acquire for themselves, as of the advantages given to them without trouble.

Moreover, our possessions are not given to us for our own

purposes, that we may please ourselves with them; they are given in order to carry out the will of Him who bestowed them. We hear people say, "May I not do as I like with my own?" Certainly, if you have anything which is really your own; but if all that you possess is *not* your own, but you are merely the steward appointed to take care of it, you may *not* do as you please with it, but you are strictly bound to employ it as you are directed.

What we have was entrusted to us, not on account of any merit of their own, but because such was God's pleasure. If you are stronger or cleverer than your neighbours, it is not because you had any right to be so distinguished, or could make yourself so—"Which of you by taking thought can add to his statue one cubit?" "He made us, and not we ourselves."

One of the greatest gifts bestowed upon men is authority over their brethren. There are few things which people covert more than power, and yet certainly there is nothing which brings with it a greater responsibility. It is a more serious charge to have power over men, than to have the disposal of any kind of material possession. It is a trust in which is involved an influence over the souls, the lives, the happiness of God's creatures, of your own brethren and equals in the sight of God. What a small thing in comparison is it to have power over material things—to have gold and silver at your disposal.

I am going, therefore, to-day to speak of the duties of masters towards their servants. A great many will doubtless say, "This does not concern me;" but this is not very often the case. We are almost, all of us, in some sense or other, servants, as I before said; but at the same time we are generally masters, too, in one way or another. What has to be said on the subject does not merely affect great people who have troops of servants at their call, but concerns all who have authority over any one—and there are few amongst us who have not. It very often happens, indeed, that those whose authority is the least extensive have the most need to be careful in the exercise of it. In proportion as power is narrowed it becomes absolute. If you have one or two people under your control your power is often much more arbitrary and complete than if you had two or three hundred. Take the case of a despotic sovereign over a nation; he must, in the nature of things, let the great mass of his subjects alone; but an arbitrary and tyrannical master of a house destroys the happiness of every one in it.

It is quite as important, therefore, for those to whom power is entrusted on a small scale—no matter how small—to know how

to use their authority over individuals, as it is for the great people of the earth to know how to rule the world.

It is a very pleasant thing to be honoured and obeyed by others, and to see them dependent upon our word, and we all like to receive titles of honour, and to be called "lord" and "master," and it is very difficult not to feel over-exalted by it.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us that King Herod one day appeared before the people, "arrayed in kingly apparel, and sat in the judgment-seat, and made an oration to them. And the people made acclamation, saying: It is the voice of a god, not a man. And forthwith an angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honour to God" (Acts xii. 21).

We are, most of us, like King Herod in a small way, and apt to take glory to ourselves on account of the deference paid to us by others, just as if the glory of it really belonged to us.

The first condition, then, for the proper use of authority is not to be carried away or made insolent by the possession of it. If we thought rightly the very obedience and reverence shown to us by men ought to make us fearful and humble. Listen to the words of a man who was a great example of humility: "The centurion, making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed; for I am also a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (St. Matt. viii. 8). Here you see, my dear brethren, the centurion makes the very reverence and obedience shown to him a reason why he himself should be humble before his Master, and, in the same manner, when you find people calling you master, and obeying you it should be a perpetual reminder that "you also have a Master in heaven."

I must now proceed to consider what are the duties of masters to their servants. To begin with, I must observe that a great number of different relations of life are included in the term "master." You have landlords and their tenants, farmers and labourers, head officials and those under their control, manufacturers and their workmen, and, then, the largest class, the masters of households, and the men and women who are employed in and about their houses. All these come under the denomination of masters, because they are people "having authority," and have all, in a greater or less degree, the dangerous and responsible attribute of power over their fellow-creatures. All these different kinds of masters have, in some

degree, the same position, and what has to be said of one set, applies, with a little modification, to all the others.

Whenever we exercise lawful authority—no matter of what kind—we are in the place of God, since "there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1); and all authority is to be exercised according to the words of my text, "as of the power that God administereth." We could not have any consideration more likely to have a sobering effect on the minds of all in authority, or one more likely to check the insolence of power, or the thoughtlessness which accompanies it, than the idea that we are using God's power, and acting in His name.

To use authority in a manner worthy of God, it is plain that it must be justly used. The first attribute of the Almighty is infinite justice, and a representative of God who is not just is an abomination. I have before spoken of the virtue of justice as being the foundation of all society, and yet as being a difficult virtue. Justice between master and servant is very often the most difficult kind of justice, because it brings into play the prejudice of class.

There is nothing which developes more strongly all the bad qualities of human nature, and which it is harder to overcome, than the feeling excited by differences of race, and differences of class. It is comparatively easy to understand and recognize the rights of people of your own race and country, and of your own class in society. The rights of others come home to you in this case, since your own rights and feelings are more or less concerned; but when you have to consider what is just to people of, say, a different colour, speaking a strange language, or, in a lesser degree, to people in a different position of society, and placed in different circumstances, it is very difficult to enter into their feelings and acknowledge their rights.

You see instances of this every day. Take the example of slavery. How long a time it was before men could be got to feel what were the *rights* of the case. It was all very well to patronize, and to be kind to the black men, but people found it hard to admit that they had equal rights with their neighbours. The same thing we see in all social difficulties between workmen and their employers; for instance, as a rule, neither party can see fairly what are the rights of their opponents, so as to be quite just to them. It is necessary, therefore, in dealing with those who are not exactly in our own position—whether above or below us in station does not very much matter—that we should be on our guard against being misled by class feeling, and so made unjust.

Justice does not merely mean that you must do what you are compelled to do by the law. It is true, indeed, that the law of the land regulates the rights of property, and the social rights which each man possesses; but it does so only in general terms, and cannot touch individual cases. All human laws require to be interpreted by the rules of natural justice and Christian charity, and if, you do not attend to these, you may do what is very unjust, although it is according to law. You may, for instance, take advantage of the weakness and necessities of the poor, so as to drive very hard bargains with them, and become their oppressors. We have only too many instances of this; for example, when landlords use the power which circumstances have given them, so that their tenants can hardly live, or manufacturers grind down their workmen, so that they become little better than slaves.

There is a law of the land, indeed, but there is another and a higher law, and that is, that men have a right to live. Neither landlords nor manufacturers, neither farmers nor tradesmen have a right to say to themselves: It is no concern of mine how my people live: all I have to do is to get what I can out of them.

The first part of justice to your servants is to pay them their wages honestly and promptly. This is a matter of strict justice: "Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy, and the poor . . . but thou shalt pay him the price of his labour the same day, before the going down of the sun, because he is poor, and with it maintaineth his life, lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be reputed to thee for a sin" (Deut. xxiv. 14).

Defrauding labourers of their wages is spoken of in the Holy Scriptures as one of the sins specially crying to heaven for vengeance. St. James says: "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which has by fraud been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth" (St. James v. 4).

At the present day there is no great fear that people will defraud their servants on any large scale, but small injustices of this kind are often practised against those who cannot protect themselves.

There are a great many kinds of injustice which are in the power of masters and employers. These consist in many other things besides keeping back money; injustice is often committed by doing an injury to the character of those under their charge. Masters, for instance, are very often unjust in refusing characters to their servants without reasonable cause.

This is sometimes done through anger as a kind of vengeance. There has been a disagreement, and perhaps angry words have

passed, and then the employer takes advantage of his power to injure those who have offended him, by refusing to give any character, and so, perhaps, depriving them of the means of livelihood. He is not obliged by law to give a character, and therefore refuses, or gives it in such a way as to make it useless. Again, some people refuse to give characters to their servants, to save themselves trouble; they think that if they commit themselves to any character, they may have to write letters, or answer questions, and do other things which will be troublesome—so they refuse to give any character.

This is manifestly an injustice, since any one who has been your servant has clearly a right to ask for a character on leaving your service, and you are bound to say all that you reasonably and truthfully can say in his favour.

Besides being strictly just to your servants, you must be considerate; that is, you must not ask of them more labour than is reasonable. There are some employers who do not seem to care how many hours a day they keep their servants at work, or how much labour they impose upon them. We used to hear terrible stories of the hardships to which workmen in factories, and not only men, but women and children, were exposed—of the long hours they were expected to work, till body and mind were worn out with toil. A good deal of this has been prevented by law, but still a good deal of it remains.

If we are considerate, we shall always remember that our servants and workmen are just of the same flesh and blood as ourselves; that they feel fatigue and exhaustion as we do, and have the same need of rest and recreation. We all know that this is the case, and yet there are a great many people who never think of sparing their servants unnecessary fatigue and trouble; to gratify their own whims, for instance, they do not care how long their servants are kept up at night, or what strain of work is thrown upon them.

There is another part of considerateness which requires special mention—that is, considerateness of speech. When we have power over others, we can speak without fear of being contradicted, and the abuse of this power is one of the great temptations of wealth. If you have been brought up surrounded by all the good things of this world, it is very hard not to become overbearing and insolent to your inferiors. You see this sometimes in children. They have always been treated with respect by the servants, and never contradicted, and they are very apt to become rude and overbearing, and to fancy themselves superior beings, who may say and do any insolent things they please. Of course, it is the fault of their parents if they grow up in this

way. They ought to have been corrected and taught better things, and to have learned how very slight and artificial is the distinction between them and their inferiors; but their conduct illustrates the tone of mind of many who should know better. Grown-up people do not often venture to display their feelings so openly, but the same sort of thing shows itself sometimes in a very offensive manner.

You have a right to look for and exact proper respect and reverence from all under your authority, according to the law of nature and the usages of society; but, on the other hand, you must *pay* respect to your inferiors. Every one of God's rational creatures has a claim to some reverence; all Christians, indeed, have a right to a very great reverence as being children of God and members of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Peter says: "Honour all men: love the brethren." You may be very rich, so that it may be worth men's while to bear patiently all that you may say or do; you may be very powerful, so that no one will venture to resist your behaviour, but that does not excuse you in the sight of God for failing to give to your brethren the respect which is their due.

It is necessary therefore to avoid all rude and insulting words to your inferiors, and not only words that are actually insulting, but unkind, disagreeable speeches, and cutting remarks which are likely to give pain. It is no excuse to say that you mean nothing by them—that it is only because you are irritable and out of temper; hard words are none the less painful because of the state of your temper.

This is true of all violent and contumelious language, but applies particularly to that which you use to your inferiors. When you are speaking to equals, who are able to retaliate if they like, your language is comparatively harmless, as they generally care very little about it; but when you use insulting language to those who are not in a position to protect themselves your words become very painful and offensive. The very fact that you forget yourself so as to speak in such a manner shows a contemptuous tone of feeling which is in itself very injurious.

You must be considerate to your servants, even when they are wrong, and you have cause to find fault. We are all a little inclined to be hard upon the deficiencies of those under us, and to expect from them a perfection we are very far from possessing ourselves. St. Paul says: "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1).

When we find fault with others it is as well to think of our own

shortcomings. Our own faults are no reason why we should not blame others when it is our duty to do so, but are a very good reason why we should be considerate and patient with the offences of others.

It is not enough to consider the real wants and welfare of those under your care, but you must also be careful not to wound their feelings, or lower them in their own eyes or those of others. As men are constituted, no amount of substantial kindness will altogether make up for the want of this sort of consideration; sometimes, indeed, favours conferred without any attention to the feelings of others have rather the air of insults.

I now come to the last of the duties which masters owe to their servants—whatever may be the kind of authority which they possess—and this duty is a proper care for their spiritual good. You have to care for them in two ways—by not giving them scandal or putting them into occasions of sin, and by giving them proper opportunity and encouragement in the performance of their religious duties. Your obligations differ, of course, very much according to the sort of control which you possess, and the age and condition of those under your charge.

To begin with, you must take care not to lead them into evil, either by requiring any service which is wrong in itself or by setting them a bad example. If you do wrong yourself your responsibility is doubled when you have others dependent upon you. If by example, or, still more, by making them sharers in your sin, you lead them astray, you are using for their destruction the authority which God has given you for their edification; and if they perish their souls will be required at your hands.

It is not enough to avoid giving bad example yourself—you must also see that it is not given by others. There are many good people who would never dream of giving even the least bad example themselves, but do not take any heed as to what goes on in their houses. They do not trouble themselves about the morality of their servants, but will engage servants without any care as to their character, and allow them to associate with those who are innocent and inexperienced; or perhaps bring children into houses where the tone and manners of the servants are not those of a Christian household. We cannot doubt that God will hold them responsible for the evils that result from their carelessness.

Another part of the duty of employers is to see that their servants have reasonable time and opportunity for attending to their religious duties. They are bound to see that they have sufficient leisure to assist at Mass on Sundays, and that they have the opportunity of frequenting the sacraments at proper times.

I have before spoken of the fault committed by those who spend their Sunday in such a manner that their servants cannot make it either a day of rest or a day of devotion ; but it is not enough merely to give them an opportunity of doing their duty to Almighty God. You must encourage them to attend to their religion, and, if they are young people, at any rate, you must see that they avail themselves of the opportunities they have. It is not judicious to interfere too far, or too minutely, in such matters with those who are of mature age ; but if you have young people under your authority it is clearly your duty to look after their religion.

To do this properly, it is necessary to take care that no work is put upon them which shall prevent them from attending properly to their duties. It is not enough if you merely give general directions ; you must also see that these directions are, in fact, carried out. General orders are very often neglected in a large household, and work is often thrown upon the younger servants in such a manner as to make it very difficult for them to comply with their religious obligations. Besides giving them time and opportunity, it is your duty to see that they do not neglect their religious duties through carelessness.

You ought to insist upon regularity in attending Mass, and approaching the sacraments at proper times ; you must take care that they observe the laws of the Church about abstinence, and also, if necessary, see that they receive proper religious instruction.

You sometimes find people who will not engage Catholic servants, in order to avoid the trouble of looking after them and providing for their religious necessities ; but this is a very unworthy and cowardly way of escaping from responsibility, and must be looked on as a great injury to religion, and a serious neglect of the great means of doing good, which their position in life affords.

I should like to add a word here about the practice of family prayers, which is not so common as might be wished. There is nothing more beautiful, or more advantageous, than the practice of assembling the whole household—parents, children, and servants—morning and evening—to join in prayer together.

Family prayer, if carried out with regularity and devotion, is the best possible way of keeping up a Christian spirit in a household, and bringing down the blessing of God on all who are members of it.

I must conclude by repeating that what I have already said about the duties of masters does not concern only those who are great people with many dependents, but applies to all who have

control over any of their fellow-creatures, however limited their their charge may be. We are almost all masters, at one time or another, and we are generally very ambitious of power. If we thought, as we ought to do, of the great responsibility which belongs to authority over our fellow-creatures, and of the account we shall one day have to give of the power entrusted to us, we should not be so anxious to possess it. Our great anxiety ought to be to use the power which we have, not for our own gratification, but as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, that, when our Master comes to take an account of our stewardship, He may say to us: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many" (St. Matt. xxv. 21).

SERMON LV.

Anger.

"And God created man to His own image; to the image of God He created Him" (Gen i. 27).

IN these few words, my dear brethren, we have the origin of the dignity of the human race. This is the charter by which man assumes the proud position he holds on earth; he is the lord of this earth, because he is made after the image of his Creator. However many may be the weaknesses and failings of his nature, although, indeed, in many respects he is inferior to some of the brute creation around him, still he rules them all because he is made to the image of God.

It is this likeness to God, and the considerations which flow from it, which give such significance and importance to man, and all that concerns his welfare.

But for this he would be as the beasts which perish—life and death, good and evil, and all the things which concern him would be of no importance except to each individual, and not very much to him; they would soon be over, and be as though they had never been. As it is, however, man's life, and what befalls him in the course of it, has an almost infinite importance, since his life is to be continued to all eternity after the image of his Creator.

I am led, my dear brethren, to this consideration by the subject I have to speak of to-day. The Fifth Commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—treats of human life and its value, and of the crimes which destroy human life, and, moreover, of all those passions which lead to them.

To understand this subject properly we must duly appreciate the value of human life, and the things which make it so precious. Man represents his Creator upon earth; and has been created for an eternity; and his soul has been purchased, not by corruptible things as gold or silver, "but with the Precious Blood of Christ." Even human life, therefore, before God is of immense value, and of infinitely greater importance than any earthly goods. It does not matter how poor or contemptible the individual may be—whether he is good or bad—his life is sacred, since it was given by God, and all rights over it belong exclusively to God. God alone

is the "master of life and death," and it is His special privilege to dispose of it according to His good pleasure: "I will kill and I will make to live; I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

No man, of himself, has any right over the life of another, or over his own life; and, therefore, any one who takes away life commits a most grievous sin by usurping the exclusive privilege and right of his Creator.

No consideration of anger, or of gain, or of political feeling will ever justify or excuse the crime of bloodshed, by which God is insulted and society outraged, and a human soul hurried unprepared into judgment.

The crime of blood-guiltiness is one of those specially crying to God for vengeance, Listen to the words of the Holy Scripture: "And God said to him: What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the earth. Now, therefore, cursed shall thou be upon the earth, which hath opened her mouth and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand" (Gen. iv. 10); and again: "Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed; for man was made to the image of God" (Gen. ix. 6).

Almighty God delivered all creation into the hands of the human race; but the life of man he reserved for himself. "And God blessed Noe and his sons; and He said to them: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth; and let the fear and dread of you be upon all the beasts of the earth, and upon the fowls of the air, and all that move upon the earth: all the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand; and everything that moveth and liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herbs I have delivered them all to you: saving that the flesh with blood you shall not eat; for I will require the blood of your lives at the hand of every beast, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man, and of his brother, I will require the life of man" (Gen. ix. 1).

There can only be two justifications for taking away human life. The first of these is the right possessed by public authority. The right of life and death, which belongs to God alone, has been entrusted by Him to human society, although not to individuals; and, therefore, society, as represented by lawfully-constituted authority, has the right to take away human life for its own protection.

This may be either in a just war—in which men are called upon to fight for their country—or else in order to punish those crimes which threaten the welfare of society. Those, therefore,

who take away life, as the instruments of a lawful authority, are, in reality, only carrying out the will of Him who is Master of life and death. St. Paul, speaking of public authority, says: "If thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 4).

War, and the punishment of the wicked involving the sacrifice of human life, can, however, *only* be justified by a public authority, which represents the society of men: no private person can ever have the right to take life. The practice of duelling, which was once common in this country, and is still frequent enough in some places, is, therefore, nothing else but murder. It is nothing to the purpose that both of the parties fighting the duel are willing to risk their lives; they have no right either over the lives of their antagonists or their own. A man who fights a duel, therefore, in the sight of God is guilty of two crimes—he is guilty of murder, because he intends to take the life of his opponent if he can; and he is guilty of suicide, or self-murder, because he willingly allows another to attempt his life without any just cause.

The only other justification for taking human life is self-defence—that is, the defence of one's life, or of the life of a third person. You may defend your own life against attack: and, if you kill your assailant in so doing, you are without blame, and you may also defend your property; and if the thief is so pertinacious that your own life is in danger, then you may protect your own life at the cost of his.

There are many degrees of guilt in the shedding of blood. The greatest crime of all, which is held in abhorrence by God and by men, is the crime of murder. It is murder if a man takes the life of another unjustly, and quite wilfully, and with deliberation—that is, when he has sufficient time to think what he is doing—and by it he is guilty of the sin of Cain, and deserves and receives from God the curse of Cain. It is hardly necessary to say that it is always a mortal sin, and that no excuse of provocation, or of interest, or of supposed benefit to society can for a moment be received even as a palliation. "Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed."

The next degree of guilt—which is only inferior to murder—is that which is called manslaughter, which also is an unjust and wilful shedding of blood, but is, in some degree, excused by want of deliberation. It is the act of a moment, done without time for sufficient reflection, and, therefore, *just* escapes the extreme guilt of murder.

Besides these two crimes, about which it is hardly necessary

to speak, there are many kinds of homicide, which are not quite wilful, and, accordingly, differ very much in guilt.

If you are the cause of another's death by carelessness or negligence, it is clear that you are in some degree accountable. You had not, indeed, any intention of causing so great a misfortune, but still you knew you were running a risk by your carelessness—a risk which you had no right to run, and your guilt before God will be in proportion to the knowledge which you had of the danger.

I cannot conclude what I have to say about the crime of homicide without speaking of the indifference to infant life, which is very common at the present day. By the carelessness of mothers and of those in charge of infants, or sometimes, unfortunately, by design, a great number of little children perish, and it is the fashion of the day to make comparatively light of the crime. This clearly arises from a false view of the value of human life. We must remember that the life of the poorest and meanest human being upon earth, of the youngest infant, or of the infant not yet born into the world, is as much the gift of God, and His own exclusive possession, as that of the greatest of Kings, and that every human soul alike is stamped with that mage of God on which all its real dignity consists.

I have said so much about homicide because it is the direct object of the Fifth Commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—although the crime of shedding blood happily does not require very much consideration in our own time and country.

The common things which concern us in the Fifth Commandment are the interior sins which sometimes, as their extreme result, lead to homicide, and which are of themselves hateful to God and injurious to man—namely, anger, hatred, and revenge. These are not of much consequence with men except for their external results, but God looks to the heart. Before Him it is not the murder actually committed, which horrifies men, but the murder which is thought of, and consented to, in the heart, and all the evil passions which lead to it, which are the crime. Our Lord says: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 19).

The sins against the Fifth Commandment generally proceed from anger, and we will, therefore, consider what anger is, and how we are to guard against its evil influence. Anger is a certain swelling of the heart at provocation of some kind, which, if it is encouraged, sometimes bursts forth into a torrent of evil, carrying everything before it. We must not, however, look upon it as a thing which is evil in itself; on the contrary,

it has been planted by God in our hearts for good. "Be angry, and sin not" (Eph. iv. 26). Its object is to make us indignant with wrong, and to stir us up to resist evil; and, therefore, it is not wrong in itself, but because it is wrongly directed, and is not kept within bounds. The feeling of indignation, when rightly guided, becomes zeal for the cause of God, and for the defence of the weak. We can hardly fancy any one who is really in earnest, whose heart is not stirred within him when the cause of God is in question. "I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away, because they kept not Thy word" (Ps. cxviii. 158); and of Phineas in the Old Law the Almighty said: "Behold, I give him the peace of My covenant, and the covenant of the priesthood for ever shall be both to him and his seed, because he hath been zealous for his God"—and, indeed, our Lord Himself gives us the example of the holy zeal when He drove the money-changers from the Temple: "And when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, the sheep also, and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew . . . . and His Disciples remembered that it was written, 'the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up'" (St. John ii. 15).

There are plenty of things with which we may be angry. Let us be angry with sin; let us stand up bravely for the cause of God and religion; let us know how to be stern, and even fierce, if necessary, against all who would lead us into temptation. Numbers of people are led astray because they do not know how to be angry, and to resist, at the right moment, in a sufficiently peremptory manner.

The misfortune is that our "zeal" is not directed to good, but is made to serve the purposes of our own self-love and pride. It is a slight injury or affront to ourselves, or a little jealousy or injured vanity that causes our hearts to swell within us, so that our indignation becomes not the "zeal of God," but the "anger of man." Anger is generally sordid and selfish in its beginning, and is, moreover, intemperate in its course.

If, therefore, we would be "angry, and sin not," we have two things to attend to: we must take care that our anger is rightly directed, that it is for some good and righteous cause, and that it has in view not our own selfish ends, but the service of God; and, moreover, we must take care that we are not carried away by it. The moment any feeling, however good in itself, becomes our master instead of our servant, and carries us beyond control, it is always a great danger.

Every one knows the terrible effects of uncontrolled anger, and the evil it has worked amongst men, and the number of sins

which every day arise from it. Nothwithstanding this, however, we find people always trying to make excuses for themselves, and wishing to persuade themselves and others that it is not their fault.

They will tell you they have a naturally angry and irritable temper which they cannot control, and so forth. Now, it is just these excuses which prevent men from really doing their best, and, instead of trying to amend their faults, they spend their time in making excuses for them, and persuading themselves that they cannot be helped.

You cannot help having an irritable temper, that is very certain; it is just like any other quality of body or mind given to you, but it does not follow that you cannot avoid sins of anger.

In this fault, as in many others, people continually mistake between temptation and sin. They say: "I felt very angry, and was very much out of temper, and very irritable." Perhaps so; but these things are not sins. It is no sin to feel cross or annoyed or irritable; the sin would be if you allowed your feelings of annoyance to lead you into saying or doing something which you ought not to do. It is no merit for a person to be very kind and moderate in language and behaviour, if he has no temptation to be otherwise; but for one who is filled with indignation and irritability, to speak and behave quietly and patiently is an act of almost heroic virtue.

This, my dear brethren, seems so obvious as not to be worth saying, but still I think you will often find good people who are much disturbed, because they have "felt cross," even if, all the while, they have done exactly what they thought it their duty to do. It is true, you ought not to act through passion; but, on the other hand, you are not to be deterred from doing your duty because you cannot avoid feelings of irritability from coming into your mind.

It is no excuse, therefore, to say that you are naturally irritable, because the very work that God has given you to do in this world is to overcome such evil dispositions, and He is always ready to give you the help necessary to do so.

The next excuse that men make is that their passion is very soon over. This is a very foolish excuse. Soon over! So is an earthquake or a hurricane; but the consequences continue long enough for all that. You hear people who seem almost to take a pride in their own tempers; that they are so hasty—that they are up in a moment, as if it were some rather remarkable peculiarity for which they were not accountable; whereas it is simply want of mental discipline. How came their temper to

be so uncontrolled? Only because they never took the trouble to train it as they should have done.

So much for the passion of anger in itself; but I must now speak of some of the common ways in which it shows itself. It is hardly necessary to dwell on the terrible effects of uncontrolled passion; the world is full of them, and we everywhere see signs of the Scripture words: "Anger hath no mercy, nor fury when it breaketh forth" (Prov. xxvii. 4) in deeds of cruelty and violence which deface God's creation.

To come, however, to common life, and to what happens every day, let us see to what anger is likely to lead us if we do not keep it in check. Unrestrained anger naturally and almost necessarily leads to a quarrelsome temper—to that disposition of mind which is always finding some cause of complaint and indignation. Wherever he goes, whatever company he frequents, a quarrelsome man finds something to fight with. Everywhere he meets with offence, and he passes his life in injuring and receiving injury, in paining others and being made wretched himself. Such a man violates charity every hour, and at last, perhaps, commits some frightful deed, which is never to be forgotten. What is the reason of all this? Is society in league against him? No; but he has never learned to control his temper; and provocations, which to others are of no consequence, become serious matters with him, and call forth the full torrent of his indignation. What can be a greater misfortune to a man? What can warn us more effectually of the necessity of controlling the passion of anger than the sight of a really passionate and quarrelsome man?

Sometimes this quarrelsome temper is confined to little things, and then becomes peevishness. A little thing provokes you, and, although your anger does not go to any very great length, it leads you to grumblings and complainings, and petty indignation at trifles. What is this but a quarrelsome temper on a small scale?

Quarrelling naturally results in injury to neighbours by words or deeds—sometimes by deeds which go very far on the road to murder. A great many murderers never meant blood when they struck the first blow, but passion and revenge grew as they yielded to them. More commonly, however, quarrelling leads only to injurious words, and these are bad enough. The tongue is a keen weapon, and those who use it easily forget how sharp it is, and the pain which it inflicts. A great many people think it a small matter to use contemptuous and abusive language to others in their anger; but our Lord tells us something different when He says: "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall

be in danger of the Council, and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (St. Matt. v. 22).

The worst consequence of indulging in anger—that is, of allowing your anger to be violent, and frequent, and prolonged—is the sin of hatred, of which I must now speak.

St. John says: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself" (I. St. John iii. 15). No words could show us more clearly how hateful this sin is in the eyes of God. Hatred of our brethren cannot but be unpardonable in the sight of God, who is the very Spirit of Love, and before that Saviour whose will is to make us all brethren.

By hatred is meant that disposition of mind by which you exclude any one of your brethren from the fraternal charity you are bound to have for all men. You hate your brethren when you are determined to see no good in them, but seek out the evil that is to be found in them and dwell upon it, and rejoice in the evil. It is the exact opposite of charity, which "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (I. Cor. xiii. 5). Hatred does not see evil to deplore it, and grieve over it, but exults in the evil and its consequences. The devil is a "murderer from the beginning," because he rejoices in evil, and desires evil for men, and he who hates his brethren is his disciple, and joins with the devil in desiring evil for them.

The sin of hatred, therefore, cuts a man off from God, and associates with him God's enemy, and so long as any one indulges in the sin of hatred against any one of his brethren, he puts an impassable barrier between himself and his Creator—he cannot obtain pardon for his own sins, he cannot receive any of the sacraments worthily, or receive any grace from God.

Hatred is a sin which produces the most terrible effects upon the soul of him who indulges in it; it is a poison which turns all the good in his own disposition into evil; which distorts and corrupts his ideas of right and wrong, and makes him odious before God and man.

By hatred is meant something very much more than not "liking" a person. It may easily happen that you do not like people—that is, that you do not approve of their conduct, or do not find their company agreeable, and, therefore, would rather shun their society. Christian charity does not oblige you to *like* every one in this sense—indeed, it would be impossible. What we are bound to do is summed up in these words of the Catechism: we are bound "to wish well to all, and pray for all, and not willingly to allow ourselves any thoughts to the prejudice of any one."

If, then, you would avoid the sin of hatred, you must compel yourself to wish well to all men. No matter how grievously any one may have offended you, or what reasons you may have for disliking him, you must always wish for his real good—good for body and soul, good for time and eternity—and you must be able sincerely to pray for him. There is no better test of real charity than to be able to pray for those who have offended you. If you can do this with real earnestness, it is quite plain that you are not indulging in hatred. To do this, however, you must lay aside all thoughts of vengeance, and all complacency in evil thoughts about them. If you are indulging in evil thoughts, and dwelling upon them, and rejoicing in the evil, then your prayers are a mere mockery.

It seems very hard—to some dispositions particularly—to subdue the hatred which arises from great provocation ; but we must learn to do it for Christ's sake. Once bring yourself to think of those who have offended you not as your enemies, but as members of Christ, and you will find it easy enough to wish them well. How can you be united to the Head, and, at the same time, hate those who are His members? Look upon them, also, as possible fellow-citizens of heaven. There is no one so wicked that he may not some day be united with us in the kingdom of God, when all that is now odious and sinful shall, by God's grace, be purged away. If you could only fancy to yourself that your greatest enemy would be with you before the throne of God, would you not be ashamed of indulging in hatred towards him?

Again, we must learn to look upon all sinners with compassion. Those whom we dislike most are either good people, who, whatever may be their faults, are the members of Christ, and actually in His grace, and then we must love them, because He loves them; or else they are the lost sheep, for whom He is seeking with such loving solicitude. Those who are wandering from God, and are really great sinners, are indeed most deserving of our pity, and any thought of personal and private dislike which we may have for them ought to be swallowed up in commiseration for the misfortune of those who have lost God, and are in danger of eternal destruction. If you were to see even your worst enemy, the one in all the world whom you were most disposed to hate, in danger of a terrible death, I think your dislike would be changed into pity. In the same way we ought to think of all sinners who are in danger of hell fire, however much they may have offended us personally.

The very best remedy against hatred is that which our Lord suggests, when He says : "Do good to them that hate you : pray

for them that persecute and calumniate you" (St. Matt. v. 44). If once you set yourself in earnest to do some good, however little, for those towards whom you feel the sensation of hatred, the very effort to overcome yourself will certainly turn all that hatred into Christian charity. I shall have to speak more in detail upon the forgiveness of injuries, because this forms so large a part of a Christian's duty. So I will now conclude by the thought with which I began, that every man is made after the image of God, and something of that divine image is always to be found upon him whilst upon this earth, and it is our duty, under all circumstances, to respect the image of God, and never by thought, word or deed, to violate that image. "Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" He that violates the temple of God, him shall God destroy." However fallen and degraded any one may be, yet, in the eyes of faith, he carries about with him the stamp of the divine image and something of the excellence of the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by which he was redeemed.

SERMON LVI.

Forgiveness of Injuries.

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls" (St. Matt. xi. 29).

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is our example in all things; He is the pattern and model of all classes of men—of priests and of laymen, of the old and of the young, of the King on his throne as well as of the peasant in his cottage. St. Peter says: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (I Peter ii. 21). Why, then, let us ask, does our Lord, in so special a manner, call upon us to imitate Him in His meekness?—because "I am meek and humble of heart." The reason seems to be that the virtue of meekness is, in a very particular way, a Christian virtue, and one which was always to be the especial badge of our Lord's followers.

There are some virtues which the world admires exceedingly, though it does not imitate them. If you are just and upright in your dealings, and open-handed to your neighbours, and disinterested in your conduct, the world will praise you for what you do; but meekness is a virtue which, generally speaking, it does not understand, and holds in contempt. Those who are meek appear to men to be cowardly and poor-spirited, so that they frequently have to bear with much insolence and derision in return for the virtue which they are practising.

It is a very hard thing for those who live in the world, and are full of its spirit, to whom its approbation is like the breath of their nostrils, to practise a virtue so much opposed to the ideas of men, and for this reason our Lord puts His own example before us for our encouragement.

The virtue of meekness is most frequently shown in the forgiveness of injuries; this, therefore, will be the principal subject of which I shall speak in this sermon.

Our Lord insists upon a forgiving spirit as necessary for all Christians, and He insists upon it as a thing absolutely essential for salvation. In one of His parables He tells us of the master who forgave an immense debt to one of his servants; and then how this same servant found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred pence, and "laying hold of him he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant, falling

down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me and I will pay thee all; and he would not: but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Then his lord called to him, and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldest not thou, then, have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord, being angry, delivered him to the torturers, until he paid all the debt. So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (St. Matt. xviii. 28). No words could express more strongly the absolute necessity of forgiving others, or put more plainly before us the reasons for doing so, "If you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts," you shall have no pardon from God.

It must, moreover, be a forgiveness, not only in word and outward appearance, but from the heart. The motives, too, are put before us: we are to forgive because we are all one family. "His fellow-servants were much grieved." We cannot indulge in a spirit of revenge without offending against that bond of love which unites Christians, and doing an injury to the whole body. Our own Master, moreover, has forgiven us a great debt, which we were quite unable to pay, and this not once, but a hundred times, and we are bound to show our sense of His kindness by forgiving our brethren.

Our Lord puts the same duty upon us in another way when He says: "If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and then thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift" (St. Matt. v. 23).

God will not accept anything from your hands till you have made friends with your brother; you are to pause even in the act of offering your gift, in order to make up your quarrel, because God will receive no gift from one at enmity with his brethren.

There are two ways in which we are to practise the forgiveness of injuries. The first is by forgiving offences at the moment they are committed. When an injury is done, or an insult is offered to any one, his first idea is to inflict summary punishment upon the offender, and to retaliate by giving him all the pain in his power.

If we would follow the example of our Lord, we must learn to forgive, even at the moment when the injury is offered, and to bear wrongs patiently. "When He was reviled, He did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not" (I. Peter ii. 23).

Men are not always called upon to follow our Lord's example literally, but they should always act according to the spirit of it. In the ordinary society of men it is generally quite lawful to retaliate, and punish offences that are offered, because this is usually necessary for self-defence. You may defend yourself, and punish the aggressor within just limits—not in order to take revenge, but simply as a matter of precaution and self-preservation. If you did not do so, to some extent, it would be almost impossible to live amongst men, and to keep the position and the just rights which God has given you. What Christians have to learn, therefore, is to be forbearing and patient in their self-defence, and to do nothing in the spirit of hatred or malice.

It is in this kind of forgiveness that the virtue of meekness is principally shown, and it should be our great desire to learn that spirit which was heroically displayed by the saints of God, and which is so dear to our Lord, and to carry it out in practice as far as possible; by so doing He tells us that we "shall find peace for our souls."

The other sort of forgiveness is shown in not "bearing malice," but being ready, when the injury is passed, to be reconciled to our offending brother. This is often a very difficult thing, but it is one which is absolutely essential.

To begin with, we must quite put aside all notion of revenge. It may sometimes be necessary to punish others, either for their good or for our own protection; but revenge is never lawful. "Revenge is mine, and I will repay in due time" (Deut. xxxii. 35). All vengeance belongs to God, and we must leave it to him: "there is one that seeth and judgeth." If we think to avenge ourselves, we are taking upon us a part which belongs to Almighty God, and which He alone can execute justly. He alone knows the hearts of men, and what they really deserve; whereas the vengeance of man is tolerably sure to be unjust as well as presumptuous. It is not enough to put away the intention of revenge, we must also give up the desire of it, so far as with our hearts to wish for the good, and not the evil, of those who have offended. If you still continue to desire and long for vengeance, and delight over the evil which befalls the offender, it is a small thing that you have given up the idea of actually doing anything to him yourself.

You sometimes, however, hear people say of those who have wronged them, that "they leave them to God." This *may* be said with the best possible dispositions, but sometimes it seems rather like a curse—as if, though they professed to forgive, they were really praying for vengeance, and calling for God's punish-

ments on their enemies. This is very far, indeed, from the spirit of our Lord's words, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you" (St. Luke vi. 27).

We have to forgive our enemies without exception. There are a good many people who are tolerably forgiving in some things, but they have certain reserves, and will never bring themselves to pardon some particular offences. You hear people say, for example, "So-and-so has belied me, and that I will never forgive," and so forth.

This sort of forgiveness is not worth very much, since the very fact of making such reserves is a plain proof that you forgive in other cases, not for God's sake, but because you don't care much about the matter, or, perhaps, really have nothing to forgive.

We have, then, to give up all intention of revenging ourselves, and also all wish for vengeance, and we ought to do this completely. A great many people are ready to forgive in great things; they are willing to put away all serious desire of revenge, but they spoil it by taking little revenges for themselves. They cherish and store up a few hard or disagreeable things to say when occasion offers; they do not want revenge, but they just wish to make the transgressors feel what they have done by a few words, or some course of action which they propose to take. Is not this a trifling revenge?—a revenge of word, or tone, or manner, or something which takes away from the perfection of the forgiveness.

You often hear the expression, "I will forgive, but I can never forget." I suppose those who use this expression very often do not think exactly what they mean by it, Of course, they are not expected to forget in the literal sense—and, indeed, any serious fault committed must, in the nature of things, change the estimation in which you hold your neighbour; but they generally mean more than this—they mean that they have some little reserve of vengeance and ill-will which they mean to treasure up and pay back again some day or other. When this is the case your forgiveness is mere words, and really means nothing.

Our Lord is not even satisfied with this complete forgiveness, but He goes on to tell us to "overcome evil with good." St. Paul says: "Not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge to Me, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink, for doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but

overcome evil by good" (Rom. xii. 19); and St. Peter says: "Not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing; for unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing" (I. St. Peter iii. 9).

This is a hard lesson, and there are few who practise it in its completeness. A great many partly forgive and do not seriously offend against charity, but there are but few who give themselves, and incline their hearts to carrying out our Lord's lesson in its fulness. If people did so they would find that it was easier and more satisfactory to do it wholly "than to do it in part, and that by doing it they would find rest for their souls."

To induce us to forgive our enemies, and to encourage us to make our forgiveness as complete as possible, our Lord has made the forgiveness of our sins depend strictly upon the way in which we forgive our neighbours. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Our Lord embodies this condition for the pardon of our sins in the prayer which He teaches us to say so often; so that we may pronounce judgment upon ourselves if we are unforgiving.

It is a part of that general and most just lesson which our Lord teaches us when He says: "With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 2).

"For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). There is not one of us who does not feel that he will need the patience and forgiveness of His Creator when the time of trial comes; and, therefore, we ought all to give that same measure of patience and forbearance which will be so necessary for us. Our only hope for ourselves is that God will forgive us, and that He will do so in the most unreserved, complete, and indulgent manner possible; let us, then, bestow on our neighbours the sort of forgiveness we hope one day to receive.

It does not come naturally to us, because man of his own nature is bitter and revengeful. We must, therefore, learn to forgive, and it is a supernatural virtue, to be acquired by prayer and by practice. We must accustom ourselves to forgive, and to forgive easily—that is, not to make a difficulty about it. You double the value of your forgiveness if you forgive at once, and forgive heartily and cheerfully. We must take care to have no reserves, but as we propose to forgive, not out of personal feeling, but for God's sake, we must be ready to forgive all things, to all persons.

It is a poor thing to say you forgive, and yet secretly to bear malice all the time, so as to be ready to renew your quarrel and take up your old grievance again on the first opportunity. When people forgive in this manner they are a little like Ananias,

who offered to God his money, but kept back a part. St. Peter said to him: "Whilst your land remained, did it not remain to thee? and when it was sold, was it not in thy power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart?" (Acts v. 4.) Let us not pretend to forgive for God's sake, unless we are prepared to give up our enmity thoroughly and without any reserve.

Finally, we must be ready to forgive again and again. St. Peter once asked our Lord: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him—till seven times? Jesus saith unto him: I say not to thee till seven times; but till seventy times seven times" (St. Matt. xviii. 21).

We think a great deal of it if any one commits a fault against us a second and a third time; but we think very little about it if we sin against God again and again, till our offences, to use the words of the Psalmist, "are multiplied above the hairs of our heads." If we make no difficulty in forgiving, even repeated offences, we provide for ourselves the best ground for hoping for the pardon of our own many relapses into sin.

There are a great many people who fancy that they would forgive any great injury done to them, as good Christians should, and yet are in the habit of indulging in resentments about trifles. Some one has spoken an unkind word of them, or affronted them in some way or another, or has, perhaps, failed to show them the attention they consider themselves entitled to, and they cannot, or will not, get over the slight, for a long time. They would not for the world really bear malice, but they do not think trifles of this kind important enough to call for the exercise of Christian virtue, and so they go on keeping up an ill-feeling, and, perhaps, some desire of small revenge on account of them.

You constantly find quarrels and bitterness kept up amongst good and religious people on account of very small things. If the offence had been more serious they would very likely have forgiven it, but they do not make it a matter of conscience, because it is so small. The great things, however, occur very seldom, and the little things very often, and we ought to accustom ourselves to be forgiving in trifles, if we hope to act as good Christians should in really difficult circumstances.

These little things; moreover, are not so trifling as they seem; because, in reality, the peace of society depends much more upon them than it does upon the great things which happen but seldom. Small quarrels, moreover, give a great deal of scandal. When religious people are quarrelling about trifles the enemies of religion exult; they exaggerate the evil and compare our professions with our practice, and so find an opportunity for attacking our holy faith. There are, indeed, few things which are more

likely to "give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," than bearing malice and being hard of forgiveness in trifles.

All sins of malice, hatred, and revenge are abominable in the sight of God, because they are so completely opposed to the brotherly love which our Lord has established amongst us. I will, therefore, my dear brethren, conclude this subject by speaking of fraternal charity. It is not enough not to hate or bear malice or injure our neighbours. Our Lord asks for more: He asks us to *love* them. "By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples, if you have love one for another" (St. John xiii. 35). I dare say you all know the story of St. John in his old age; that he went on repeating in all his discourses: "My children, love one another," so often, that his disciples were weary, and asked him why he kept on saying it. To this he answered: "It is precept of Christ, and if you do this it will be sufficient."

In this St. John was but carrying out the strong words which he had already written in his Epistle, where he says: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren;" and, "My dearest, if God hath so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" and, again, "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (I. St. John iv. 11–20).

St. Paul also says: "Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. xiii. 8).

In the great stress which the Apostles lay upon the duty of fraternal charity, they are but following our Lord's own words. When he describes the last judgment He speaks simply of kindness to our neighbours and works of mercy: "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink," as if our salvation depended upon these things only. It is not that a great many more things are not necessary, or that our Lord and His Apostles meant to pass them over, but because those who have a real and genuine charity to their neighbours, can hardly fail, at the same time, to have all the other qualities necessary to please God. "The love of our neighbour worketh no evil: love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

Now, my dear brethren, let us consider what are the qualities of this love, that we may not be carried away by mere words, and think we have charity because we talk about it. By "loving our neighbours," we mean loving *all* men. If you love only your friends, or your countrymen, or pleasant people, whose society you like, it is not charity: "If you love them that love you,

what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this (St. Matt. v. 46). It is a mere natural love which any pagan may have.

This is very clearly shown in the parable of the good Samaritan, in which our Lord answers the question: "Who is my neighbour?" Here our Blessed Saviour chooses for His example a Samaritan—one of those who hated the country and religion of the Jews so much that they wouldn't speak to them. The man whom he found destitute and half dead, beaten, wounded, and covered with blood, is the example of what our Lord means by our neighbour.

Nothing can better explain that He does not mean only those whom we naturally like, but all men, however much they may differ from us in country or religion, in language or manners. Again, it points out that our charity is to be disinterested. If you love only rich and pleasant and respectable people, who may, one day, do you a good turn, your charity is not worth much. I dare say the wounded man would have found a great many friends if he had been well dressed, and had had plenty of money, but the difficulty was to find friends when he was stripped and half dead. Real charity, therefore—that is, loving our neighbour for God's sake—must include all men, however disagreeable and repugnant they may be to us by nature. This does not indeed interfere with the very special love which we ought to have for all who are our brethren as members of the Church: "Let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

But this love is not to be spent in mere words. There are a good many people in this world to whom fine words are a snare, and they think they have done a great deal because they have talked about it. St. James warns us against this by saying, "If a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food, and one of you say to them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled, yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit" (St. James ii. 15).

Charity, therefore, must show itself by something substantial; by giving your money, or giving your time; by taking trouble, or by enduring annoyance, and practising self-restraint. If you find that it does not show itself in any of these ways, you may generally look upon it as not existing.

Our Lord gives us a description of the love we ought to have for others in the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our love for ourselves certainly does not spend itself in words, but, on the contrary, is ever on the watch for the least opportunity of securing an advantage or a pleasure for ourselves.

If we had the love for our neighbours which we ought to have, therefore, we should have a little of that ingenuity in contriving, and patience in carrying out, what is for their good, which we find when it is a question of our own welfare.

The spirit, moreover, in which we do things for others ought to resemble the spirit with which we work for ourselves. Here, again, the parable of the good Samaritan helps us. "He bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine" (St. Luke x. 34). By the wine we may very well understand real substantial help, and by the oil that other kind of help which is nearly as important—the help which consists in kindness and compassion, in gentleness of manner and considerateness of speech.

We never stint either the oil or the wine with ourselves, but we take abundant care not only to provide substantial good things, but also everything which can be pleasant to our feelings, and we are sufficiently cautious to avoid even the least thing likely in any way to hurt us. With our brethren, however, we very often leave out the oil; the good is done, but the kindness omitted. A great many people do much good for others, but they do it in a hard, dry, stern fashion. If they help those who are in trouble, it is in a harsh, unfeeling way; if they give money to the poor, it is in an arrogant manner, and, perhaps, with contemptuous words. What is this but leaving out the oil? Good deeds done in this way are deprived of half their value, because they are not the fruit of the charity by which we love our neighbour as ourselves.

Again, the same principle will make us patient with others, with something of that patience which we show to ourselves. We see our own faults clearly enough, and often are very much ashamed of them and disgusted by them, but we are very kind to ourselves notwithstanding. So let it be with our neighbours; we cannot help seeing their faults, and, if need be, reprobating them, but let us be kind and patient with them in spite of their faults, and not be in too great a hurry to cast them off because they are not all that might be wished.

The love of our neighbour is to be not mere natural benevolence, but something more: it is to be a real love, given for God's sake. We ought, indeed, to cultivate the natural feelings which God has put into the hearts of men—tenderness of heart, sympathy with suffering, and dislike of giving pain, desire of making others happy, and so forth; but we must add to this a supernatural love to all men, because they are the creatures of God and redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ.

If we want to have this love in perfection we have an easy

way to acquire it. Always see Christ in His poor; see Him in every human being who is afflicted and in pain—in the hungry and the sick, and in every one who needs your assistance. This is just what He Himself tells you to do: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me" (St. Matt. xxv. 40).

If we can only bear this in mind in our dealings with others we shall not fail in fraternal charity. Everything we did for others would then be done in that patient, loving, and respectful spirit which is the mark of that true charity by which we love God above all things, and our brethren for His sake. Amen.

SERMON LVII.

Scandal.

"The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at hy hands" (Ezech. iii. 18).

THE term scandal, my dear brethren, is used in two quite different senses. It is very often employed to mean evil report, or words against the character of others; but, in religious books, it is the name given to all the sins by which we injure the souls of our neighbours. Any one who is the cause of the sins of others is like a man who puts a stumbling-block in their way, or, to use the expression of Holy Scripture, becomes "a stone of stumbling or a rock of offence" to them (Is. viii. 14), and is therefore said to give scandal. It is hard to exaggerate the enormity of this sin. If it is so terrible a sin to kill the body, what must it be to inflict mortal injury on the soul? "Fear not," our Lord says, "those that kill the body, but rather him who can cast both body and soul into hell," and the man who gives scandal may be the cause of the eternal loss of body and soul. It is true there may be time for repentance, and therefore his crime may not be irreparable, as it is with the death of the body; but, on the other hand, the evil of having cast even one soul into hell is a greater evil than any material death can ever be.

The man who gives scandal commits also the greatest possible injury against God—that is, he injures Almighty God in the only sense in which it is possible for Him to be injured, by depriving Him of the glory which belongs to Him, and of the love and service of His creatures. He, moreover, takes part with the devil, and helps him in his work, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour" (I. St. Peter v. 8). The man who gives scandal puts his prey within his reach, and helps him to carry out his wicked purpose. We cannot, then, be surprised when we hear the terrible words in which our Lord speaks of scandal: "It is impossible that scandals should not come, but woe to him through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones" (St. Luke xvii. 1).

If God will require the blood of a murdered man of his

murderer, as he did of Cain, we cannot doubt that He will ask of you an account of the soul that has fallen into perdition by your means. "I will require his blood at your hands," this is what Almighty God says in my text, and it was said to those who merely failed to prevent their brother's fall; much more strongly will the words apply to those who have actually caused the destruction of others.

It is plain, when we speak of the subject, that there are two sorts of scandal which must be distinguished—scandal in general, and scandal to individuals. A man may have no intention of tempting any one, and no idea that he is leading, or has led, any one into sin, and yet his whole life and behaviour may be such as to be a constant scandal and occasion of sin to the community at large. Such a person is like the Upas-tree, which spreads poison around: he makes every one a little worse that comes in contact with him, and is perpetually lowering the tone of society.

There are a great many ways in which the general sort of scandal may be given; you may scandalize others by your sentiments and opinions, or by the things that you do, or by what you leave undone. Many good people, for instance, give scandal by the views and opinions they express; sometimes it may be by talking in an irreligious manner, or by taking up broad and what are called liberal ideas of things; sometimes by being irreverent and rebellious in their tone of mind, or, at any rate, talking as if they were. Those who speak in this way, either publicly, or habitually in private, very often do so without thinking much of the responsibility which attaches to them. They use such words, perhaps, out of levity and want of thought, and, it may be, out of a desire of notoriety, or to please men, and they do not remember that their sayings will very likely be repeated, and enlarged upon, if they hold an important position in life, and may do endless harm to souls.

The same applies to many other kinds of conversation. If you are habitually worldly and unprincipled in your ideas and ways of thinking, and are constantly spreading around you low views of religion and morals; if you "are of the world, and therefore of the world you speak, you cannot doubt that you are perpetually giving scandal." St. John says, "Love not the world nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I. St. John ii. 15). Those Christians whose sentiments and feelings are those of the world, and who, by word and example, are propagating and encouraging

the ideas of the world, cannot fail to be to their neighbours the "odour of death unto death."

I dwell upon this because, in these days of freedom of speech, we are a little apt to forget the responsibility which we have for our words, the sentiments we express, and the opinions we give. It is to no purpose that we say we never meant to do harm—that we never reflected on the injury they would do to others; that is our own fault; we are responsible in the sight of God for all the harm which we might have known, and ought to have known, was likely to be occasioned by our words.

The same applies still more to those who are leading immoral lives, or are living in the neglect of their duties to Almighty God. They may not, perhaps, be directly leading any particular person into sin, but they are giving scandal to the world at large, and helping to make those around them wicked.

All this may be done heedlessly; you may not actually perceive that you are leading any one into sin, and you may never know all the harm you have occasioned until the Day of Judgment. There is, however, another kind of scandal in which the harm is done more directly, in which people see the evil they are doing, and either intend the harm and do it quite wilfully, or else are indifferent about it, and do not take the trouble to avoid it.

The worst kind of scandal is, of course, malicious or malignant scandal—that is, when people actually and deliberately try to lead others into sin. You hear of instances of men scheming and plotting against the innocence of others—endeavouring, for example, to lead some one else into sins of impurity or dishonesty. This is sometimes done out of a real desire of evil—because, like the devil, they hate good, and take pride in wickedness; and sometimes, again, it may be out of mere selfishness, to obtain some end or satisfaction of their own, and they do not care about the injury they inflict on others.

Those who lead others into sin in this way are guilty of two crimes—they share in the guilt of the sin actually committed, of which they were in a great measure the cause, and they are responsible for the injury done to the souls of their neighbours. The Catechism mentions nine ways in which we may share in the guilt of the sins of others: "By council, by command, by consent, by provocation, by praise and flattery, by concealment, by being a partner in the sin, by silence, by defending the ill done."

These nine ways may be with advantage placed under a few headings. The first is the *suggestion* of sin; that is, if you teach people evil which they did not know before, or advise

them to commit sin, and urge them on, either by precept or example, to do what they would otherwise never have thought of doing. The most direct suggestion is commanding—if you use your authority over others to make them do wrong, or urge them to commit sin by threats, or by over persuasion. The Jews became sharers in the sin of Pilate in this manner, when they cried out, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend;" they threatened him with the displeasure of the Emperor if he did not commit the wickedness on which they had set their hearts. There are a great many ways of suggesting evil and leading others into it, and this applies specially to some kinds of sin. It may be done by example, or it may be done by wicked conversation, or perhaps by putting others in the way of finding evil in bad books or wicked company.

Those who suggest evil in any of these ways are undoubtedly the real causes of the sin, and those who are led away are their victims; *they* will perhaps perish, but God will ask their blood at the hands of those who were the causes of their fall.

You are also partaker in the sins of those who are your accomplices in any sinful act; you have not only your own share to account for, but you are responsible for the guilt of those who took part in your sin. This is true, even supposing these accomplices would very likely have sinned without your co-operation, but much more, of course, when, without your participation, the sin would never have been committed, as would be the case if you were the prime mover in the wicked action.

You participate in the sins of others not only by suggestion, but also *encouragement;* praise and flattery, concealment, and silence are not exactly the causes of sin, but they are encouragements in it. St. Paul, before his conversion, gives us an example of this when he held the clothes of those who were stoning St. Stephen: "and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man who name was Saul" (Acts vii. 57). Those who lead bad lives themselves, even if they do not more directly co-operate in the sins of others, at any rate do so, to some extent, by the encouragement their example gives to sin.

So far, I have been speaking of the scandal given to others by what is distinctly wrong, either by suggesting or encouraging what is evil; but you may give scandal by doing what is right and lawful in itself. This may happen in two ways—first, when you are doing what is right in itself, but which must necessarily appear wrong to others who cannot be acquainted with the true circumstances of the case, and, consequently, may become an occasion of sin to them. You may not lawfully mislead your

neighbours in this way, and your action, though perfectly right in itself, would be sinful if you did not take pains to explain it so as to avoid scandal.

This may be well illustrated by the story of the holy old man Eleazar in the second Book of Machabees.

In the persecution of Antiochus, he was commanded to eat swine's flesh on pain of death; "but they that stood by, being moved with wicked pity for the old friendship they had with the man, taking him aside, desired that flesh might be brought which it was lawful for him to eat, that he might make as if he had eaten of the flesh of the sacrifice: that by so doing he might be delivered from death . . . . but he answered without delay, according to the ordinances of the holy law made by God, saying that he would rather be sent into the other world: for it doth not become our age, said he, to dissemble: whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar at the age of four score and ten years was gone over to the life of the heathens, and so they through my dissimulation, and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age: for though, for the present time, I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead" (II. Mach. vi. 21).

Rather than give scandal by eating the lawful food prepared for him, this holy old man was ready to sacrifice his life. In this case, however, the food was to be eaten distinctly as a sign of his abandoning his faith, so that, even independently of the scandal to his brethren, it would not have been lawful to take it.

It often enough happens that, for particular reasons, we are free from some of the obligations which bind Christians generally; there is a very sufficient reason why we cannot fast or abstain, or why we are obliged to do work on Sundays or holidays: the necessity is clear, and we have been lawfully dispensed, so that what we do is quite lawful and right. We are bound, however, to avoid doing it in such a way as to shock others, and make them careless of the laws of the Church—that is, we must either exercise the privilege we have got in secret, or else take care, if circumstances admit of it, to explain how it happens that we are not observing the Church's regulations.

At the present day, however, there are so many people who have good grounds for dispensation, that it is not always necessary or desirable to explain your reasons for not observing the days of fasting and abstinence.

The other way in which scandal of this sort may be given is

when you are doing what is perfectly right, but others suppose it to be wrong on account of their ignorance and prejudice. This sort of scandal is called the "scandal of weak brethren." Here again we have an example in the Holy Scripture, and it is also in a case of eating meats sacrificed to idols, but under very different circumstances.

Many of the early Christians thought it sinful to eat the meat which had been used in the heathen sacrifices, which was afterwards sold as ordinary food. St. Paul considers the question, and decides that there is no harm in it: that the idol is nothing, and that the best thing to do was to eat whatever was put before them: "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles eat: asking no questions for conscience' sake" (I. Cor. x. 25). He then goes on to consider the injury that might be done to those who might be led by example to eat this meat, although they considered it wicked to do so, and he says: "But take heed lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak. For, if a man see him that hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idols? And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Now, when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I scandalize my brother' (I. Cor. viii. 9).

There are many things in which our Protestant neighbours have deeply-rooted prejudices, and, therefore, we must be on our guard against giving this scandal to weak brethren. There are two things to avoid; we must avoid leading any of them into sin by making them act against the dictates of their own consciences, and we must take care, as far as possible, not to increase their prejudices against the Holy Church by doing what they think to be wicked, even if we ourselves know it to be lawful. One special illustration of this is the observance of Sunday, as to which they have a great many groundless prejudices.

I should like here to say a word or two about the necessity of putting the Catholic faith before our neighbours in a fair and intelligible light. There is nothing about the faith that they would not understand if properly explained, even if they did not at once accept it; but there are some people who, instead of explaining things, seem to have a sort of pleasure in misleading their neighbours, and shocking them, by using words in unusual significations—that is, which Catholics at once understand, but Protestants do not—by exaggerated expressions, and so forth. This course of proceeding often gives serious scandal. We have

no right to give up one "jot or tittle" of the true faith to please any one, but also we have no right to make that faith a stumbling-block by the false light in which we put it.

There is another kind of scandal, which is improperly so called —because it is not really scandal at all—it is "Pharisaical scandal." We read that the Scribes and Pharisees were constantly "scandalized" at our Lord's words and actions; but it was not that He gave them scandal, but that they chose maliciously to *take* scandal at what they knew, or should have known, to be perfectly right. When this was the case our Lord disregarded their pretended scandal, and rebuked them for their hypocrisy. They found fault, for instance, with His Disciples for eating the ears of corn as they went through the fields on the Sabbath Day; and again they found fault with Him for healing on the Sabbath Day; but He did not stop curing the sick on this account. "The ruler of the synagogue, being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, answering, said to the multitude, Six days there are wherein you ought to work. In them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath Day. And the Lord answering him said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you on the Sabbath Day loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water? and ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?" (St. Luke xiii. 14).

There is a good deal of Pharisaical scandal at the present day, and a great many things are called scandal which do not deserve that name. When the enemies of the Church are looking out for things to say against it, as the Pharisees tried to ensnare Jesus in His speech, you need not be afraid of scandalizing them, and think that you ought to keep the doctrines of the Church in the background. On the contrary, you should follow our Lord's example, and speak out the truth boldly without regarding them. Again, people sometimes think that they are giving scandal if they attract the attention of men, or make them wonder, or make them laugh, and they not unfrequently omit duties which they ought to perform, "for fear of scandal," when really they mean only "out of human respect."

It is only scandal really if you are the cause of *sin* to some neighbour, or turn away some one from the true faith and worship of God, but not if you merely excite their ridicule.

Scandal may be given, however, not only by action, but by omission. If it is your duty to keep others out of sin, or to warn them of their obligations, and you fail to do so, you are as much responsible for their guilt as if you had *actually* led them

into it. This is very clearly shown in the passage from which I took my text, which is God's warning to the Prophet Ezechiel: "If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, thou declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou give warning to the wicked, and he be not converted from his wickedness, and from his evil way: he indeed shall die in his iniquity, but thou has delivered thy soul" (Ezech. iii. 18). This text is a terrible warning to superiors, and one to which all parents, and masters, and rulers of every description should give great attention.

Parents, for instance, have often to answer for the scandal they have given to their children, both by act and by omission. Unfortunately it happens not unfrequently that they are the direct cause of a great many of the sins of their children. If they fail to provide their children with proper and sufficient religious instruction, and the children fall into grievous sin because they have never been taught and warned as they should have been, do not the words of God to Ezechiel apply exactly? They will "die in their iniquity, but I will require their blood at thy hands." Again, if parents are careless about keeping their children out of bad company, or, perhaps, even make them associate with bad companions, are they not responsible for the wickedness they learn? Will not the parents share largely in the guilt of the sins of their children?

The same applies still more to the very common case in which parents send their children into immoral and irreligious situations for the sake of gain, or, perhaps, out of sheer carelessness. Can we doubt that in such cases they will have to answer to God for their share of the consequences, and for a large share, too?

I have already spoken of the responsibility which parents incur by not correcting the faults of their children with sufficient firmness. If the children grow up badly for want of a little vigilance, and want of moral courage on the part of the parents, who is to blame?

Parents sometimes even give "scandal" to their children by more direct means—that is, they actually teach their children to sin by word and example. When parents, for instance, use bad language, and speak profane and unbecoming words in the presence of their own innocent children, are they not adding terribly to the sin they commit by the scandal they are giving? Are they not, in fact, in the most direct manner, teaching their children to sin? So it is with a great many other vices—and, indeed, as a rule, if the children are very wicked, their sin is due

to the scandal given by their parents. Well may our Blessed Lord say: "Woe to the world, because of scandals!"

What I have said of parents applies also to schoolmasters and teachers of all kinds, and also, in some degree, to all who have authority over others. There is, of course, a special responsibility on all those who undertake the training of young people. If, as is sometimes the case, they look upon this office simply as a means of livelihood, and give very little trouble to the spiritual welfare of those under their charge, but allow them to be exposed to dangers and occasions of sin, which by proper care they might have avoided, they have only too good reason to fear the terrible judgments which our Lord pronounced against all those who scandalize the little ones who believe in Him.

It only remains for me now to say a word or two about good example. If it is a terrible thing to give scandal to your brethren and to give "occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," it is also a glorious thing to draw others to God by good example. Our Lord says: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. v. 16); and the prophet Daniel says: "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3).

These two great offices—that of giving glory to His name, and being instrumental in the salvation of others—God has left in the hands of men. It is wonderful, indeed, that he should have entrusted so much to us, but He has done so, and there is scarcely any one who cannot, if he will, do a great deal for the glory of God and the edification of his brethren. A man may be very poor and insignificant in the eyes of the world, he may have very little learning or capacity, but there is always some sphere where his influence is felt, in which he may give glory to God and do good to men by his good example.

The princes and nobles of the earth; those with great wealth at their disposal; those with numbers under their control—what an immense power for good or for evil do they not possess! They may be the light and salvation and the chosen means of grace to those whom God has committed to their charge; or they may be their destruction.

The Holy Scripture tells us how King Jeroboam, to obtain his own selfish advantages, turned away the whole people of Israel from the worship of God to serve idols, and by doing so called down upon himself a curse and reproach beyond all others, as the one "who made Israel to sin." If there is a special curse on those who "make Israel to sin," there is also a special blessing on those who have been the way of salvation to

their people; their names are in benediction, and, like David's, a perpetual intercession with God for their brethren. The blessing is not confined to the great ones of the earth, but will be abundantly shared by parents, masters, civil magistrates, and all in authority, if only they will make use of their example and influence "unto edification, not unto destruction" (II. Cor. xiii. 10).

"Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps" (I. St. Peter ii. 21) and all who are in authority are, in some sense, in His place, and should try to imitate Him in being an example to those under them, and in being made a "pattern of the flock from the heart" (I. St. Peter v. 3).

May our Lord, from whom all good example comes, and who alone gives the fruit of good example, teach us all how to make our "light so shine before men that they way see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven." Amen.

SERMON LVIII.

Purity.

"Lo! the kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke xvii. 21).

WHICHEVER way we look, my dear brethren, we see around us the kingdom of God. His kingdom, visible to us in external creation, everywhere displays new marvels of power and wisdom. "By Thy ordinance the day goes on, for all things serve Thee" (Ps. cxviii. 91). Science is constantly enlarging this kingdom, and telling of new realms which the imagination of man cannot grasp—realms of the almost infinitely vast and of the inconceivably minute; and when you turn to the regions of abstract thought you again find new empires, vast and inaccessible, and unimaginable as those of the physical world. Everywhere we turn there is the kingdom of God, and God is everywhere infinite and incomprehensible. "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven Thou art there; if I descend into hell Thou art present" (Ps. cxxxviii. 7).

The words of my text tell us, however, that there is another kingdom of God, and that to us is the most important of all; it is the kingdom of God within us—the kingdom which He has established in our own hearts, in which He has made us His principal representatives and ministers, and in which principally we are to glorify Him. The kingdom of God within us is the most important of all, because all other things really affect us simply through our own hearts. We talk of external sins, but, in fact, all sins whatever are internal sins and sins of the heart. All external actions are to us simply indifferent, except as far as they affect our hearts; and actions are good or bad, and sins great and trifling according to the dispositions of the heart from which they come. Our Lord tells us this plainly when He says: "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man: for from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies: these are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 18).

We are not in general sufficiently alive to the importance of sins of thought. The attention of men is, naturally enough,

directed to the external consequences of sin, as that is the part which concerns them, and which, generally, strikes the imagination, and they do not trouble themselves very much about what it is that really constitutes sin. The very nature of sin is to be an *act*, but it is an act not of the body, but of the will, and the external action which follows afterwards, in reality, adds nothing to the grievousness of the sin, except in so far that it generally makes the act of the will more distinct and more energetic. You may, in a sense, compare the outward act, as far as the guilt is concerned, to the peal of thunder, which calls attention to the deadly flash, but does not add to its force. Since sin is the act of the will it may be perfectly complete and grievous without going at all beyond a man's own mind. Supposing, for instance, that any suggestion of hatred and malice, or of impurity, be brought before the mind, and the will, instead of rejecting it, accepts and welcomes the idea, and makes it its own, knowing perfectly well that such an idea is hateful to God and contrary to His law—then an act of the will has been made, which is a complete and distinct act of rebellion, and consequently a mortal sin; and this, though the idea has never got beyond your imagination and will.

Sins of thought are our most dangerous enemies, because they are so easily committed, inasmuch as they belong to the inward kingdoms of our hearts, in which we are undisputed masters, and where no one can resist us, and also because sins of thought are the fountains of all the evil which men commit. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (St. Matt. xii. 34).

I have already been speaking of two classes of sin—that is, of the sins we commit directly against Almighty God, by neglecting our duties to Him, and of the sins we commit against Him, indirectly, by injuries done to our neighbours. I am brought by the subject of to-day to consider another class of sins—namely, sins against ourselves. Sins against ourselves are sins committed by the bad use of the powers and faculties of body or mind bestowed upon us. Bad use, means either not using them at all, and so letting them lie idle, or else turning them to an unlawful use, contrary to the ends for which they were intrusted to us, and so wasting them. "His Lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strewed: thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my return I should have received my own with usury. Take ye

away, therefore, the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents" (St. Matt. xxv. 26).

The special object of my discourse to-day, however, is one of that class of interior sins, the guilt of which consist in the *abuse* of the powers of body and mind which God has given to you. These sins do not necessarily inflict injury upon others. When they do so, of course, a fresh element of evil is introduced, but the essential evil of them is the misapplication of the powers given to us contrary to the will of Him that gave them.

The Sixth and the Ninth Commandments—"Thou shalt not commit adultery," and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"—are the two commandments which prohibit all sins against purity; external sins, those of action and conversation, and also the inward sins of the heart and imagination. To use the words of the Catechism: "The Sixth Commandment forbids whatever is contrary to holy purity, in looks, words, or actions," and "The Ninth Commandment forbids all wilful consent to impure thoughts and desires, and all wilful pleasure in the irregular motions of the flesh."

In the sixth there are two things forbidden; one is the great injury sometimes occasioned to our neighbour by sins of this kind. Every wilful thought, word or deed, inconsistent with the rights of husbands and wives to the special and exclusive affection required by the marriage contract, is an act of injustice, and these thoughts, and all the occasions which lead to them, are strictly forbidden. Of these the Apostle says: "The Lord is the avenger of all these things, as we have told you before, and have testified" (I. Thess. iv. 6). The other sin forbidden is unlawful self-indulgence, independently of its effects upon others.

This is a most important and most difficult subject, which requires the attention and consideration of all. No human being, of whatever class he may be, can reasonably consider himself as safe from the attacks of the vice of impurity; no rank or station of life is so high as not to be exposed to temptation, and no profession so holy as to be beyond its reach. We carry the seeds of temptation with us, as part of our original corruption, and cannot escape from it in this mortal life.

History shows us that men of all ranks—the strongest and wisest, and even the holiest of men—have been attacked by the temptations to carnal sin, and sometimes have been shamefully overcome by them; and, therefore, if we rely on any exemption from the conflict for ourselves, we are but leaning on a broken reed. As if to convince us of the danger, St. Paul tells us, of himself, that "lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given to me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan

to buffet me, for which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me, and He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity" (II. Cor. xii. 7).

These words assure us that we cannot look for freedom from temptations, but, at the same time, give us a great confidence that we need not fear them. The temptation of itself can do us no harm; however vile or degrading it may appear to be, it is not any stain to the soul so long as it is bravely resisted. We find many instances in the lives of the saints of the holiest, both of men and women, who have been exposed to most violent assaults of this kind, and have been tormented by all sorts of horrible imaginations and suggestions, and yet at last have come out of the conflict uninjured, like the three children in the fiery furnace, so that "not a hair of their head had been singed, nor their garments altered, nor the smell of the fire had passed on them."

If, then, my dear brethren, you should be tempted in this manner, "think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you" (I. St. Peter iv. 12); but resist temptation boldly and promptly, remembering always that God's "grace is sufficient" for you, as it has been for others.

There is just one way of safety, and that is by fighting the good fight, and overcoming the enemy. People sometimes delude themselves by supposing that some other state of life would secure them from danger; if they were secluded from the world and its temtpations, or if they were married; but, married or single, secluded or in the world, there is no safety, except in bravely fighting, and treading temptation under foot.

I must now speak a little more precisely about the sin of impurity, and for this purpose I dwell for a few moments on its dangers and miseries. In the first place, it differs from many other sins in this, that the smallness of the matter, or the insignificance of the object, does not afford any excuse. In most things actions which would be seriously wrong in important cases are trifling, because the matter in question is only trifling; but this is not so in sins of impurity; so that, if you consent to *any* temptation against purity, wilfully and deliberately, knowing what you are about, and fully meaning it, you are guilty of a mortal sin. This is very terrible to think of, but a little reflection will show it must be so.

The sin of impurity is, in a special and marvellous degree, opposed to the sanctity and perfection of Almighty God, so that even the least taint of it is odious to Him, and it is, besides, of such a nature that it does not require quantity to

produce all its effects. A little fire is just as good as a great deal for the purpose of burning down a house ; once get the fire to catch, and it matters very little how great, or how small, was the original blaze which did the mischief. If a spark of fire falls on you, you may shake it off before it has time to burn, but, if it does burn, you cannot make it trifling.

To use another comparison, the sin of impurity is like a poison. You sometimes hear of people dying by the bite of a poisonous serpent, and you marvel that death can follow from such a very slight prick as that of the serpent's tooth ; but when you hear that the one drop of poison has corrupted the whole mass of blood in circulation, you are no longer astonished at the speedy death that has followed.

Such is the effect of the sin of impurity on the soul of man, and if, as the Holy Scripture tells us, we are to flee from all sin —"Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent ; for, if thou comest near them, they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men" (Ecclus. xxi. 2) —with what haste should men escape from one so deadly as the sin of impurity !

Nothing can give a stronger idea of the rapidity with which such sins act than our Lord's own words : "I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (St. Matt. v. 28) ; and our Lord's words are only too well borne out by the facts of human life. History is full of examples in which one glance, or one word, or one thought, has been the destruction of men, and carried them away to perdition.

You cannot, then, be surprised that there can be no half measures in dealing with a sin of this sort. Consenting wilfully and deliberately to any sin against purity involves in itself consequences unknown and unthought of: it is like consenting to slip down the first few yards of a precipice : it seems a little thing, but virtually means going to the bottom.

I compared the sin of impurity to the bite of a venomous snake which curdles the blood in the body, and so produces instant death ; it is like it in the rapidity with which it acts, and also in the sort of effect it produces. It is a kind of a sin which takes possession of the whole man, body and soul. No sooner has it entered in, than the mind and heart, the understanding and the imagination, are full of it ; every faculty and power of the soul is absorbed and paralyzed by it, and there is no room for anything else. A sin like this lays waste the inward kingdom of the heart, blights and destroys everything good within it, and produces instead a crop of poison, in the shape of evil habits,

which are sure to spread farther and farther if not most vigorously rooted out.

This is no fancy picture, but is one seen but too often in real life. Multitudes of men have become the victims of this sin, and know to their cost how blighting and destructive have been its effects when once it has taken possession of the imagination and the heart. Those who are its victims are good neither for this world nor the next; they can neither pray, nor can they work, because all their faculties are engrossed by that sin to which they have surrendered themselves.

"Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or obedience unto justice" (Rom. vi. 16). Every one who gives way to temptation finds that he has taken upon himself a yoke. It may seem light at first, but, by-and-by, it becomes a very heavy and painful servitude—a servitude which is every day more galling to the conscience and more bitter to the heart.

"What fruit, therefore, had you in those things of which you are now ashamed, for the end of them is death . . . . for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 21). There is no sin which brings these words of the apostle more plainly before our eyes. In all sin the end is death, but it is covered from our sight; but here, no sooner has the tempest of passion past than the land is seen to be bare and scorched, and that *nothing* is left but bitterness and sometimes despair. It is, indeed, one of the frightful consequences of this sin that it makes its own abominations so conspicuous and painful, that it brings with it temptations to despair. It is so painful to bear the yoke of sin, and so hard to shake it off, that sometimes nothing but the special grace of God will prevent the victims of impurity from giving up all hope for this life and the next.

We cannot, then, be surprised, my dear brethren, at the care and vehemence with which all of us are warned to keep clear of this vice, and to avoid every danger of being contaminated by it. The great secret of avoiding sin is to keep out of danger. It is heroic to expose ourselves to some sorts of danger, but, in others, the only true heroism is to keep away as far as possible; so it is important to consider what are the dangers chiefly to be avoided.

They are two—the senses and the imagination—which are dangerous to different people according to their different temperaments and dispositions.

In the first place, a certain amount of watchfulness over the senses is absolutely necessary to all who would keep out

of sin. The holy Patriarch Job says: "I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin: for what part should God from above have in me, and what inheritance the Almighty from on high" (Job xxxi. 1). The very fact of an effort of self-restraint is the greatest possible protection, because it puts the soul, as it were, in a posture of self-defence; whereas, on the contrary, the mere want of any kind of restraint invites attack. It is, moreover, foolish to pretend that you are trying to avoid sin if you do not at least take some care to avoid what leads to it; you might as well pretend to be putting out a fire with one hand, whilst you were lighting it with the other.

It is necessary to avoid all those things which are our own particular temptations; there are some things which every good Christian is bound to keep clear of; for instance, there are many sights which no one has a right to look at, and many kinds of conversation to which no one ought to listen; but, besides this, there are some things dangerous to one person and not to another. We must, therefore, not only keep away from things which are dangerous to all, but take care also to avoid those things we know to be dangerous to ourselves personally.

The greatest of all dangers, of course, is that of bad company, because in it is generally included every kind of temptation, and we may almost say that those who willingly put themselves in what they know to be really dangerous company, have, as a rule, pretty well made up their minds to commit sin. "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27).

Besides the temptations arising from the senses there are dangers from the imagination. To many people the greatest of all dangers comes from the wanderings of the imagination, and the forbidden objects which it places before them. The imagination is indeed a most curious and powerful faculty, which creates a world for itself, and fills it sometimes with creatures which outshine in brilliancy anything the existing world can produce, and very often its temptations are more difficult to resist than any other, and, at any rate, they are difficulties from which you cannot escape, since you carry some of them with you. To avoid the dangers of the imagination two things are necessary. You must keep out of those things which will excite the imagination and give it dangerous food to feed on, such as bad books, or books which, without being actually bad, you know are dangerous to you personally; and, moreover, you must resist bad thoughts at the beginning.

Our Lord teaches us to say: "Lead us not into temptation," although temptation must be our lot every day; but, then, there are many stages of temptation, some of which we can avoid,

although we cannot hope to escape from the others. Every temptation begins by a mere suggestion or idea, which is quite external to the soul, and of itself cannot do it the least harm; then comes the stage in which the mind suffers the temptation to remain, and allows itself to deliberate. If this state of deliberation is permitted to continue, the next stage comes very quickly, and the soul consents and accepts the temptation with complacency, and determines to commit the wickedness suggested. The nature of temptation was illustratcd when our Lord was tempted in the desert. The devil came to Him and placed before Him a number of most wicked suggestions, but as our Lord could not for a moment hesitate in rejecting them, they were all purely extetnal, and, of course, without the slightest stain of sin. When such suggestions are not purely external—that is, if you allow yourself to look the temptation in the face, and deliberate upon it before you make up your mind to reject it—there is always some danger and some stain. St. Paul says: "Let no temptation take hold of you but such as is human" (I. Cor. x. 13). You cannot avoid being tempted, but you can prevent the temptation from *taking hold* of you, by not stopping to consider it, and by not allowing it, so to speak, to plead its cause, before you reject it.

Any kind of trifling with temptation is dangerous in all things, but especially in temptations against purity; because if you once allow yourself to consider the temptation you have almost let the thing go out of your own hands. The temptation will increase in violence so much that what could have been easily resisted becomes almost overwhelming. If you turn your mind resolutely away for a few minutes and compel it to think of something else, of business or amusement, you will conquer the bad thought; but if you stop to consider about it, there is great fear that you will be led into sin.

You cannot be too careful, then, in promptly rejecting all evil thoughts, or in avoiding the things likely to lead to them, but you must not let care degenerate into scrupulosity. Scrupulous people make an occasion of sin out of everything they see and hear, and all the ordinary occurrences of life, to which people in general pay no attention, become dangerous to their over-sensitiveness. In the same spirit, want of judgment is sometimes shown in attempting to secure young people from danger by keeping them in an unnatural atmosphere of precaution. This is a mistake, and sometimes increases the dangers against which it is intended to guard.

You cannot keep any human being in ignorance of sin, and blind to all that is going on in the world around: "Otherwise

you must needs go out of this world" (I. Cor. v. 10); and it is vain to suppose that innocence can be preserved simply by ignorance of evil. It is necessary, therefore, that people should be prepared to meet and encounter all the ordinary dangers of the world, and not to think to escape them by over-precaution. If you honestly and sincerely desire to do what is right, and to resist whatever is wrong, and do what you can to obtain the help of God in your conflict, you may safely encounter all the dangers which are legitimately and naturally thrown in your way.

I must conclude by dwelling on the love which God has for holy purity, since love and admiration for this virtue are the best preservatives against temptation. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii. 1). There is a great and distinguished honour in the sight of God to those who have preserved the grace of spotless purity, and, as St. James says, "have kept themselves unspotted from the world." St. John tells us of a glorious company, specially privileged in heaven: "And they sung, as it were, a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients: and no man could say the canticle," and "these are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 3).

Nothing can give us a higher idea of love of God for perfect sanctity than the care with which He provided for the perpetual virginity and spotless purity of her whom He had chosen to be His Mother. She was preserved immaculate by a special intervention of His power, as the most striking proof which He could give to His creatures of His love for purity.

I have been speaking of the watchfulness and care we should use in avoiding temptation, and the courage we should display in fighting against it; but all this will be unavailing unless God helps us by His grace. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi. 1).

Solomon says in the Book of Wisdom: "As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord and besought Him" (Wisdom viii. 21). We, too, if we would preserve holy purity, must make it a matter of prayer.

If you keep up a spirit of prayer, and earnestly ask God to help you in your efforts to overcome temptation, you need not fear but that you will be victorious.

Finally, we must place the virtue of holy purity under the special patronage of our Blessed Lady; she is our patroness in

all things, but especially in this most important matter. "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope" (Ecclus. xxiv. 24). She is the "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. xii. 1), who has been given us by God to be the model of spotless purity to all classes—to men and to women, to the young and the old. She will obtain for all who invoke her aid the powerful grace of God by which they may be preserved from all dangers, and rescued from every fall. To her, then, let us commend ourselves and all that belong to us, that we may obtain all the virtues we need, but especially that of holy purity. *Vitam præsta puram, Iter para tutum, Ut videntes Jesum, Semper collætemur.* "Preserve our lives unstained, And guard us in our way, Until we come with thee, To joys that ne'er decay."

SERMON LIX.

Dishonesty.

"Do not any unjust thing in judgment, in rule, in weight, or in measure. Let the balance be just, and the weight equal" (Lev. xix. 35).

I HAVE had occasion, my dear brethren, to speak of the virtue of justice, as being the virtue on which, to a great extent, the well-being of society depends. Justice, in its widest sense, is that virtue which leads us to respect *all* the rights of others, and to give to each one exactly what is his due, as St. St. Paul says: "Render, therefore, to all men their dues. Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. xiii. 7).

There is, however, a particular branch of this virtue which relates exclusively to honesty in its ordinary meaning—that is, to the money dealings between men—and takes account of all the ways of wronging our neighbours in their property and possessions, and of all those things which can be estimated by the "rule," "weight," and "measure," of which my text speaks. Everything that concerns this kind of justice comes under the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal;" and it is on this subject that I shall treat to-day.

The very existence of human society depends upon honesty and fair dealing in money matters, so it is almost impossible to say too much about its importance. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and "the earth He has given to the children of men," the Psalmist tells us; and all the rights of property are by God's appointment. The laws which regulate the possessions of individuals vary in different countries, and depend upon custom and the will of men, but the right to property has been given by God as a thing necessary for the existence of human society.

There are two sorts of dishonesty, which we may, perhaps, call direct and indirect dishonesty. The Catechism tells us that "the Seventh Commandment forbids all unjust taking away or keeping what belongs to another"—this is the more direct way of violating the Commandment, because in this way we get possession of the property of another, and appropriate it to ourselves expressly in defiance of the will of the rightful owner; whereas, in other sorts of dishonesty, some kind

of consent is generally given, though it has been fraudulently obtained.

"Unjust taking away" is either "robbery"—which generally implies open force, or violence of some kind—or else "theft," in which there is secrecy and stratagem. Open robbery contains the guilt of dishonesty, and something more—that is, the injury and insult offered to a neighbour by open violence.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the sin of theft, because all men are agreed about it; "for confusion and repentance is upon a thief" (Ecclus. v. 17). The man who steals his neighbour's money cannot deceive himself, and has nothing to say. He knows that he has sinned against God, and incurred disgrace and severe punishment from men—punishment which is necessarily severe on account of the injury which his sin does to society. At first sight it seems very hard that trifling thefts should be so severely dealt with by the laws; but we must remember that it is punished, not only as an evil thing in itself, but because, if it were unpunished it would make it impossible for men to live together in community.

All mankind unite in condemning theft, but a great many people make certain exceptions and excuses in their own case, and of these I must speak. To begin with, people are often fatally deceived by the smallness of the object of temptation. They say to themselves: "It cannot be necessary to be very particular in trifles," and so they are led on to dishonesty. It is in this way that thieves are generally made—they begin with the pence, and the pounds very soon follow. Petty thefts are most dangerous things, since they are not only sinful in themselves, but directly lead to more serious crimes; they familiarize the mind with dishonesty, and take away those natural checks by which conscience would keep men in the right road, and by so doing open the door wide to the most serious temptations.

Every one should remember that it is a very difficult, if not an impossible, thing to be *half* honest; you may aim at being honest and upright in all things, or you may make up your mind to be a thief; but it is difficult to draw a line between them, since the virtue of honesty is a whole—one beautiful thing which cannot be divided.

Some, who are not to be overcome by temptations because they are *small*, are, nevertheless, deluded by the particular form they take: they are dishonest in things to eat and drink, for example, and though, perhaps, they would never think of taking a penny, they make no scruple in appropriating things of ten times the value, because they come in a different form. There

is another kind of excuse which is not confined always to the very poor—that is, people sometimes think nothing of thefts from communities or public bodies of any kind. You find many, for instance, who would consider it a trifle or a joke to defraud a railway company—just as if the fact of their being a company made the smallest difference in the morality of the action—and the same idea is carried a little farther, when people make light of theft because those who are plundered are rich. There are not half-a-dozen rules of honesty to be applied to different objects and different people, but one rule of honesty for all men and all things; and if you are dishonest about one thing you are on the high road to being dishonest in everything else, whatever excuses you may make to yourself. What St. James says of the whole of the divine law is especially true of honesty and of truthfulness: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all" (St. James ii. 10).

The little thefts of which I have been speaking are rendered more dangerous by the habit of calling them by names which conceal the real nature of the act. If, for example, a man were to say to himself plainly: "I am going to steal so much from the railway company," or "I mean to be a thief in such and such objects," I think his conscience would reproach him; but because he calls it something else he goes on unchecked.

I now come to the second part of dishonesty, which is a very wide field, taking in "all manner of cheating in buying and selling, or any other way of wronging our neighbour;" all of which, as the Catechism tells us, "is forbidden by the Seventh Commandment." Men are led away by self-interest, by the example of others, by false and pernicious maxims, and so forth, till the world is full of dishonesty, and there are a great many who go on defrauding their neighbours, and yet manage to shut their own eyes, so as not to see the wrong they are doing. This renders it necessary to speak very plainly, and rather minutely, on these subjects.

To begin with, What is the difference in morality between theft and dishonesty? Simply that one is, as a rule, more easily found out and more severely punished than the other. What difference does it make whether you cheat a neighbour out of a shilling or put your hand into his pocket and take one? It comes to exactly the same thing, and yet there are thousands of people who would not for the world *directly* steal a shilling from a neighbour, who, nevertheless, think very little of getting a good many shillings by fraud.

The Catechism begins by speaking of "cheating in buying and selling," and well it may—false weights and unequal prices,

unjust reckonings, and unsound goods, selling one thing for another: these have been the temptations of trade from the beginning, and have not died out in our time. "How much dost thou owe my lord? A hundred quarters of wheat? Take thy bill quickly, and sit down and write fifty."

Holy Scripture says: "Thou shalt not have diverse weights in thy bag, a greater and a less; neither shalt there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less. Thou shalt have a just and true weight, and thy bushel shall be equal and true, that thou mayest live a long time upon the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee. For the Lord thy God abhorreth him that doth these things, and He hateth all injustice" (Deut. xxv. 13). And again, "Diverse weights, and diverse measures, both are abominable before God" (Prov. xx. 10). It would be a good thing if all who have to do with such matters would dwell upon these strong words.

But people will sometimes object that the custom of trade sanctions some things which, at first sight, look to be dishonest; that the public insists upon impossible conditions, and everybody *knows* that the articles sold are not exactly, and do not profess to be exactly, what they are called. All this is, no doubt, a difficulty to a conscientious trader, and something may reasonably be allowed to the customs of trade; but, on the other hand, there is a great fear that these excuses are sometimes mere pretexts for unfair dealing, and often delude honest men into becoming parties to a dishonest and rotten system of trading.

The next kind of dishonesty which requires notice is one which concerns all classes—it is honesty in paying our debts. There are, of course, many different kinds of debt—the debts incurred in domestic life, by borrowing money or buying goods, and, again, business debts arising out of different contracts, and so forth; and between these different sorts of debt great distinctions are sometimes made; for instance, a man will be very scrupulous in paying some debts and very careless in others. Such distinctions, however, are quite groundless, and indeed immoral, as we are bound to do justice to all men alike, in business or out of it, and the same rules apply universally. It is just such ideas as these which lead to the reckless trading and the dishonest bankruptcies we sometimes hear about.

There are in the law a great many loopholes by which people can creep out of their liabilities before men, but we may be quite sure that before God any one who contracts debts which he cannot pay is guilty of grievous injustice. If, for example, a person goes into a shop and buys something which he perfectly well knows he cannot pay for now, and is never likely to pay

for, how is he better in the sight of God than a thief? But perhaps he never thinks of it at all. That doesn't much mend the matter, because he knows very well all the time that he *ought* to consider whether he is able to pay. It is true that in business there are a great many chances, and there is liability to unforeseen accidents; all that is liberally provided for by law, and is no doubt a legitimate excuse for a good many who are unable to perform all their engagements; but, still, when you hear of people failing for large sums of money, with nothing to meet their liabilities, it is very hard not to think that they must have incurred large debts which they *knew* they could never meet.

But if you are not *able* to pay your debts your obligation, of course, ceases, since no one is obliged to do what is impossible; true, but it does not follow that you may, with a safe conscience, sit down and put away your liability from your mind. You are bound to *enable* yourself to pay your debts—that is, to make all reasonable exertions to get the money necessary. It is no excuse to say that you *can't* pay, if, with ordinary diligence and self-denial, you could do it if you liked.

It is not much use, however, to be honest about money if you are not also honest about money's worth; and I must, therefore, speak of some kinds of dishonesty which do not immediately concern money. An important instance of these is waste of time. For instance—as I have said in an earlier sermon—a servant wasting time for which he is paid, by idling and doing nothing, is guilty of an act of dishonesty; and much more so, naturally—though people perhaps do not always remember it—is a public servant engaged, perhaps for high pay, in the service of the public, if he squanders his time; so, again, is a teacher who idles over the work he has undertaken. I am afraid that a good many people fail to see what strict honesty, to put aside other considerations, requires of them in some of these cases; and that many who would be very scrupulous over a few pence, are very unscrupulous about unjust waste of their time.

Injustice is also committed by want of knowledge. If you undertake to do a thing for pay, and you have not got, and do not take the trouble to get, the knowledge requisite for doing it properly, it is clear that you are committing a great injustice against your neighbour. You are making a dishonest contract, and professing to give him, for his money, skill and knowledge which you have not got, and will not get. For example, a man undertakes to act as a lawyer, or a doctor, or a schoolmaster, whereas he is not fit for his work, and does not take the pains

necessary to qualify himself—it is clear that he is guilty of a grievous injustice, since it is every one's duty to see that he is competent for all that he undertakes to do.

What I have said of knowledge applies, of course, quite as much to *care*, since all the knowledge in the world is not much use without the care and diligence necessary to make it available.

Professional men, and a good many others in situations of trust, are paid for care, more than for anything else, and therefore a careless professional man, who does not give his mind to his work, but, as people say, *scamps* it, is undoubtedly acting a very dishonest part, since he is perpetually running the risk of inflicting serious and unjust injury on his neighbours.

I ought to mention that there are two kinds of care: there is the special care which a man is paid to give, or, at any rate, undertakes to give, in virtue of the office which he holds; and there is the ordinary care which all men are bound to take, not to injure their neighbours. If you have undertaken any particular office, it is plain that you are bound to justice to use all reasonable diligence to discharge the duties attached to it. Supposing, for example, you have become a trustee for property, you are bound to take all the care which the trust requires —you are bound not to neglect it, and not to run risk beyond what is allowed by the conditions on which you have accepted the office. All this is very obvious, and yet nothing is more common than to find people undertaking duties without any consideration of the conscientious obligations which these offices involve.

Another form of injustice by want of care, is an every day complaint, and that is want of care of the property of masters and employers of all sorts. This is a kind of temptation to which servants are exposed; if their masters' property is destroyed, things broken, substance wasted, the loss naturally does not come home to the servants, as it would do if the things were their own, and the loss, perhaps, makes very little difference to them personally. It requires, therefore, some consideration, and a good deal of conscientious feeling, to make them act as they ought to do by their employers' property. If they realized that part of their bargain was that they were to take care of the goods entrusted to them, and that they were guilty of injustice and dishonesty if they allowed this property to perish for want of proper and reasonable diligence, just as they would be if they made away it, it is probable that they would not act in the careless manner we sometimes observe.

I now come to the last of the indirect ways of wronging our

neighbours, which is often, however, one of the most serious: this is conniving at the wrong done by others. You may *connive* at wrong in many ways: for instance, you may assist the thief and give him opportunities, and so make his way plain; and if you do so you are as guilty as he is. If, for instance, you have the charge of property, and either out of favour to friends, or through weakness and timidity, or out of mere carelessness, you give some one else an opportunity of stealing it, it is clear that you are responsible for the injury done. In the same way, if you are silent when it is your duty to speak—if you know, for example, that dishonest practices are going on which it is your duty to stop, and you say nothing, you make yourself a partaker in the dishonesty committed by your unjust connivance.

Those who receive stolen goods, and all who share in what is dishonestly obtained, are amongst the worst of those who connive at the injustice of others. It is commonly said: "The receiver is as bad as the thief," and indeed he is sometimes much worse; "if there were no receivers, there would be no thieves," is pretty generally true, and the receiver is very often the person from whom the wrong originates, and without his co-operation it could not be carried out. The Holy Scripture says therefore: "He that is partaker with a thief hateth his own soul" (Prov. xxix. 24); and there is a beautiful illustration of this in the words of the blind old Tobias, when a kid was brought to him: "Take heed lest perhaps it be stolen: restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft" (Tob. ii. 21).

Those who are the receivers of stolen goods, or in any way partakers of what "cometh by theft," are very often guilty of two sins: they commit a sin of scandal by leading another into theft, or, at any rate, by encouraging him in his dishonesty—and they are also guilty of the wrong done to the neighbour who is defrauded. It is necessary, therefore, to be cautious wherever there is any reasonable ground for suspicion, because those who have once become partners in any kind of dishonesty, even by carelessness and want of thought, often find it very hard to get clear of the difficulty in which they have involved themselves.

All sins of dishonesty bring with them the duty of making restitution, and the Catechism tells us that "we are bound to restore ill-gotten goods if we are able, or else the sin will not be forgiven." The obligation of giving back what has been unjustly obtained, and making up for injury done to your neighbour, is a very serious one, and is often a difficulty in the way of those who have been dishonest. It is clear, however, that this is the first thing to be done by those who really repent of their dishonest

practices. When our Lord paid a visit to Zaccheus, the chief of the Publicans, and brought "salvation to his house," we are told that "Zaccheus, standing, said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold" (St. Luke xix. 8), and in the law of Moses a thief was generally condemned to make a four-fold restitution. This was intended as a punishment; but simple restitution, or making up the injury done, is not a punishment, but an obvious act of justice to which all men are bound.

You may be bound to make restitution on two distinct grounds: first, if you have unjustly defrauded your neighbour, or injured his property; and, secondly, if you have in your possession any property which belongs by right to another. If you have done an injury to any one, either by stealing, or cheating, or destroying his property, you are bound to make up the loss, even if the property is all spent and consumed, and you have made no profit out of it for yourself: you are then bound to restitution on the ground of "unjustly taking." But if property has come honestly into your hands, and you then find out that it belongs to some one else, you are also bound to restitution, and if you did not give it back you would be guilty of a sin by "unjustly keeping" what belongs to another. To take a very common case: you find something in a public place—say, a purse or a locket; you are bound to use all reasonable means of finding the owner and restoring it to him, and, if you fail to do so, you are guilty of a sin of dishonesty by not giving it back, although, in the first instance, it was no fault of yours that the owner was deprived of his property.

It must, however, be said that to be obliged to make restitution for injuring your neighbour there must have been *fault* on your part. If you injure any one by accident, without any intention of doing harm, you are not bound to make restitution: you may be called upon by the law to make up for the damage done, but, in conscience, you are only bound to make restitution where there has been sin. If you have been wickedly careless about your neighbour's property, or your neighbour's rights, you are bound to restore, because your carelessness has been a sin; but if there has been no intention of injury, and no sin of carelessness, there is no obligation in conscience to make good the damage. It is then merely an accident, of which all men must take their chance.

The Catechism says: "If you are able," because it is plain that no one can ever be *bound* to do a thing which is quite out

of his power. A great many people, however, delude themselves about restitution, as they do about their debts; "if we are able" does not mean, if we can do it without any trouble or unpleasantness. We are not excused from doing justice to our neighbours because it would involve a considerable amount of exertion and self-denial to ourselves; and yet this is what the excuse of "not being able" generally means. It is no excuse to say, for instance, "The man I wronged is at a distance, and it would be some trouble for me to find out his address, and send him what I owe him;" or to say, "I cannot spare the money to make restitution, because I want it for some other purpose advantageous to myself." If people repented of their evil deeds in the same spirit which Zaccheus showed when our Lord entered his house, it would very seldom happen that they could do *nothing* in the way of restitution. It is very easy to satisfy your confessor in such matters; what can he say if you declare positively that you can do nothing? But "there is One who seeth and judgeth."

I have only to add, on this point, that in cases where you cannot make restitution for wrong that you have done, because the person injured cannot be found, or for some other good reason, you are bound to make restitution by giving to the poor what you have unlawfully obtained.

I must conclude by saying once more that conscientiousness ought to be the mark of a Christian, and that this is what the world has a right to ask, and does ask of them. A Christian, therefore, who is underhand, and dishonest, and untrustworthy in his money-dealings, is a constant scandal to religion, and does harm to all around him. For this reason it is most important to have a high standard of honesty and commercial morality. If you take a high and severe view of your duty, and always insist upon calling things by their right names, instead of trying to make wrong seem right, as this world so often does, you make it a great deal easier to be upright and honest in practice; whereas, if your theory is low, your practice is very apt to be lower still.

Each one ought to do his best to inculcate and enforce honest principles in his own sphere, and as far as possible to resist the contagion of dishonesty. Those who have an influential position, especially amongst commercial people, may do great good by always giving their voices in favour of sound morality and uprightness, and by steadily resisting dishonest maxims and practices.

In the same way, it is the duty of parents to teach their children to be honest, both by precept and example, as dishonest

children are pretty sure to grow up into dishonest men and women.

It is a mistake to suppose that high principles and clear ideas of right and wrong come by nature, and require no teaching; on the contrary, it is certain that a neglect of proper teaching and proper control in childhood is one of the most fertile sources of evil principles and evil practice in after life.

The great remedy against all kinds of dishonesty and double dealing is the thought that God is present; the thief loves the darkness, but to him who has God before him there is no darkness; "for every one that doth evil hateth the light, that his works may not be reproved: but he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God" (St. John iii. 20).

We must also, my dear brethren, avoid that love of money from which all dishonesty springs—that covetousness which St. Paul tells us is "a worshipping of idols," remembering that all the riches of the world can never do anything for our real happiness without the blessing of God, which we can hope for only by doing our best to walk "in holiness and justice before Him all our day" (St. Luke i. 75).

SERMON LX.

Lying.

"Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth . . . . a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. vi. 16).

IN this passage, my dear brethren, the Holy Scripture gives a most prominent place, amongst the things hateful to God, to the sins of false witness and lying; and of these I must speak in this sermon. The Catechism tell us that "the Eighth Commandment forbids all false testimony, rash judgment, and lies," and in these words are implied all the kinds of deceit and double-dealing which are to be found amongst men.

False testimony is the worst form of lying, because it is a lie told with the greatest deliberation and publicity, and one which is most injurious to human society. The false witness stands up before men and outrages truth, and does his best to pervert justice; he generally inflicts an injury upon some one, and is always guilty of a treason against the society in which he lives.

I have, however, to-day to consider the more general question of falsehood, not only in evidence, but in all the ordinary affairs of life. I must begin by trying to correct a common error, which is that of supposing that the evil of a lie comes from the bad consequences which result from it. You often hear people speak of "harmless lies," by which they mean lies which have not the immediate effect of injuring anybody. The sin of a lie does not depend upon the mischief it does, but simply on its being a violation of truth. God is the "very truth," and hates falsehood, not because it does harm, but because it *is* a falsehood. If a person tells a lie by which his neighbour is injured, he in reality commits two sins—he is guilty of the sin of falsehood, and also of wronging his neighbour—and, in that sense, his lie is a greater sin than it would be if no one were hurt by it: but, in itself, one lie is just as bad as another, and that which is told with the greatest deliberation is the greatest lie.

The evil of a lie, of whatever sort it may be, consists in this: that it is opposed to the very nature and essence of Almighty God, in whose likeness we are made, and it cannot but be hateful to the Eternal Truth; and, secondly, that it is opposed to the good of human society. Men are able to live together because

they can trust each other; but if all mutual confidence were destroyed, there could be no society, and confidence depends upon truthfulness.

Let us now hear what the Holy Scripture says about it, that we may go by God's Word, and not our own fancy. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truthfully please Him," and "a false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Prov. xii. 22—xix. 5). Again, the Psalmist says: "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity: thou wilt destroy all that speak lies"—"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy Tabernacle? or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? . . . . he that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue" (Ps. v. 7—xiv. 3). When St. John speaks of the new Jerusalem, where God reigns with His saints he is careful to tell us how all untruthfulness is excluded from that holy place: "There shall not enter into it anything defiled, or that worketh abomination and maketh a lie." "But the fearful and unbelieving . . . . and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie" (Ap. xxi. 8–27—xxii. 15).

It would be a good thing if some of those who talk so readily of "trifling lies" and "lies of no harm" would dwell on these words: they would soon be convinced that everything like deceit and untruthfulness is an abomination to the Lord, and that the only way to please Him is by sincerity of heart and straightforwardness of tongue. Every lie is a sin, and must at some time or other, and in some way or other, be atoned for. Our Lord says: "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment (St. Matt. xii. 36). What a terrible liability must those incur who have the habit, not merely of idle words, but of falsehood, which is of its own nature displeasing to Almighty God!

The Holy Scripture tells us that "a lie is a foul blot in a man," and yet it will be continually in the mouth of men without discipline. "A thief is better than a man that is always lying; but both of them shall inherit destruction" (Ecclus. xx. 26); and this leads us to another view of the question. A foul blot! From this we may form a good idea of the effect of a habit of lying. Such a habit is enough to spoil completely the most beautiful character that ever existed. If a man were furnished with every excellence in the world—only you knew that you could not trust a word that he said, you could not possibly respect him. You might pity him, and say that he was "no

one's enemy but his own," and make excuses for him ; you might admire his excellent qualities, taken by themselves, but you never could think that he was what a man and a Christian ought to be, so long as he was stained with the "foul blot" of falsehood and insincerity. The world is very full of liars, and many people easily tell falsehoods and excuse themselves for doing so, but all men have a natural dislike and contempt for falsehood ; and, when they see it in others, they fully appreciate how great a stain and disfigurement it is to the human soul.

Let us now consider the different kinds of falsehood which are most common. The worst lies, of course, are those which spring from malice : these, as I have said, generally contain a second sin besides the violation of truth. Our Lord says the devil "was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father thereof" (St John viii. 44). When a man tells a lie out of malice—that is, out of hatred, or envy of his neighbour, because he intends to do him an injury, or at least wishes to lower him in the eyes of others—he is imitating the conduct of the devil —the conduct by which he was, as our Lord tells us, "a murderer." A malicious lie, then, is a very great sin, as the lie seems to borrow bitterness from the evil spirit which is the cause of it, so that we may well apply, to those who lie maliciously, the words of Scripture : "Their throat is an open sepulchre : with their tongues they acted deceitfully : the poison of asps is under their lips" (Ps. xiii. 3).

The commonest of all lies, however, are lies of excuse. These come very natural to man, and it is sometimes very hard to see the evil of them : it seems so natural, and almost so reasonable to get out of a scrape by telling a lie of excuse, and yet this is just the most fatal way of lying, because from it all insincerity generally comes. Such lies must be considered "lies of cowardice." You tell a lie because you are afraid of some one—afraid of what can be done to you or said to you ; or you are afraid of some little inconvenience which is likely to arise ; what is all this but cowardice? If people could only bring themselves to see that every time they made untruthful excuses they were guilty of an act of cowardice, I think they would easily correct themselves of the habit. What trifling things they are frightened of!—how shameful to be afraid of such things!—and yet many a brave man, who would not shrink from real danger, commits sin after sin for fear of these little things—for want of a little moral courage.

Lies of excuse are not told, as a general rule, to obtain any

great advantage; most people know perfectly well that they do not *profit* by the lies they tell; on the contrary, they are quite aware that it would be better for them if they always told the truth; so it is pretty clear that they must be considered as want of moral courage—or, as I have said, as lies of cowardice.

Such lies are very serious, because on moral courage depends the whole virtue of truthfulness. If you cannot face the difficulty of telling the truth when it is disagreeable, it is plain that you cannot have the virtue of truthfulness or straightforwardness of character. No one thanks you for telling the truth when it is favourable to you, and the very foundation of truth, as a virtue, is learning to speak it when opposed to your own interests.

The opportunity for lies of excuse is, moreover, constantly at hand, and so presents perpetual occasions of sin. If you are weak enough to make excuses, there is always something at hand which wants an excuse, so that you get into the habit of looking to see, not what is true, but what it is convenient to say on all occasions. The habit of making excuses depends partly upon want of moral courage, and partly upon a desire to be always right—that is, a difficulty in believing or admitting that you are in the wrong. There are a great many people who never will admit that they are wrong: if they are accused of anything, their first feeling is that they have to show, in some way or another, that they were perfectly right. They have, somehow, to make the facts suit their conduct in the case, and to find out reasons for all that they have done: so, naturally, they find out reasons which would be excellent, only they are not true. All this leads to an insincere and untruthful condition of mind, so that at last they can hardly be said to tell the plain, straightforward truth about anything.

These considerations show how important it is to avoid trifling lies of excuse; they may seem small things, and they are about unimportant matters; but, on the other hand, they are generally very deliberate, and one lie leads to another, so that they quite destroy the virtue of truthfulness in the soul. People cannot be *half* truthful: you must make up your mind to be truthful at all times, and in all things, or it is a mere matter of chance and accident how many lies you tell—and, indeed, you can hardly be said ever to tell the truth if you simply say what is convenient, whether true or false.

There is another kind of falsehood on which it is necessary to dwell, because it is very common and does a great deal of harm. A great many lies spring from vanity and the desire to tell a good story. You will find many people who have always some-

thing to say about themselves—"pulling the long bow," or "romancing," as it is sometimes called. They will make themselves the heroes of all sorts of remarkable and strange adventures: they always have seen something wonderful, or done something different from any one else. Their vanity is so strong, and so little checked, that it is perpetually borrowing plumes from every side to deck itself with. Such people can scarcely come across any fresh object, or be impressed by any striking history, without inventing some new story for themselves, and glorifying themselves by some new decoration. This fault is constantly found amongst children who live a great deal in their own imagination. They very easily mix up fact and fiction, till, if they are not properly checked and reminded of the necessity of being accurate in what they say, they get hardly to know whether they are speaking truth or falsehood.

This is a most deplorable and disastrous habit, and, if people indulge in it in after life, it can hardly fail to render them an object of contempt and suspicion to every one with whom they come in contact. It may be said these things do not do much harm. Yes they do—they destroy the virtue of truthfulness, and the trust which men ought to have in each other: one lie leads to another, and he who is untruthful in one thing is pretty sure, in the long run, to be untruthful in everything else.

I must now say a few words on another part of the subject which is not quite so plain, and that is about "jocose lies"—stories told in jest—the things which people say to each other on the First of April, and so forth. It is rather difficult to lay down an exact rule. If you are really speaking in jest, and those to whom you are talking may reasonably be supposed to know that you are only joking—or, at any rate, might know it with a little ordinary consideration—it cannot be called a lie, because a serious intention of deceiving is essential to the idea of a lie, and no form of speech by which you do not *mean* to deceive can ever be a lie. On the other hand, it must be said that jokes of this kind are dangerous, and if you are too fond of saying what is not true in jest, you are easily led into saying it in earnest.

There are certains forms of speech in common use in society which are sometimes the cause of scruple and perplexity. It is very usual, for instance, for people to tell their servants to say "Not at home" to their visitors, when, in fact, they *are* at home. It is lawful to do this, because at the present day the words "not at home" have got a distinct meaning which everybody is supposed to understand, and, as a rule, *does* understand. Whatever these words meant in the beginning, and mean literally, they are *now* used as a polite way of saying that, if at home, the

master of the house declines to receive visitors. In a similar way, there are many ordinary expressions of politeness which, literally speaking, are exaggerations—but every one knows what such forms are intended to convey, and there is no fear of deceiving anybody by them.

A great deal might here be said about "equivocations" and the kind of behaviour which people call "acting a lie," and the numberless other ways of deceiving your neighbour; but it is a long subject, and a very few words will be sufficient. You may never tell a lie, but you are certainly not bound to tell the whole truth on all occasions: on the contrary, a man who always said all that he thought and knew would do a great deal of mischief, and would be a great nuisance in society. You may, and should, hold your tongue, and leave people in ignorance on a great many subjects: you are often obliged to avoid, or turn aside, foolish questions which you cannot, or ought not to, answer, and it is generally easy enough to do this without any untruth, and, if necessary, you must have moral courage enough to refuse to answer. On the other hand, everything like pretence or dissimulation, or any way of misleading your neighbour, however plausible it may appear, is always to be avoided. St. Paul says: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour, for we are members one of another" (Eph. iv. 25), and our Lord Himself says: "Let your speech be Yea, yea, and Nay, nay, and that which is over and above these is of evil" (St. Matt. v. 37). The more straightforward the way in which you act towards those who are "members of one body" with you, the better, and if you have the moral courage not to be afraid of being sometimes found fault with, and can avoid the petty vanity of wanting to be always in the right, and to appear better than you really are, you will find no difficulty in straightforwardness.

I must say a few words now about the effects of the habit of lying on those who are unfortunate enough to give way to it. It is hardly necessary to say much of the immediate spiritual effect of such a sin: a lie is always a sin, and he who gives way to habitual falsehood is always lying: who can reckon up the number of sins that he commits? His habit is no excuse for him, because he could break it off if he chose; and, moreover, a lie is generally, of its own nature, a fully deliberate act—so that every falsehood is a stain upon his soul. Every sin a man commits is a stain by which the white garment of God's grace is defiled, and lying in particular is, as the Holy Scripture says, "a foul blot." How then shall the liar "dwell in His tabernacle, or rest on the holy hill" (Ps. xiv. 1)?

But the sin of falsehood is, in a peculiar manner, a sin against the society of men, and we will now consider how lying is punished *as a sin against society*. Those who speak untruly, of course, do so with some motive: they tell falsehoods because they have some end to obtain. As a rule, they are punished, in the long run, by failing in all the objects they propose to themselves. A person tells lies of excuse to avoid blame: if ever he does anything wrong or foolish he tells a falsehood to cover it. In a very short time no one believes a word of his excuses, and he gets blame, not only for what he has done, but for a great many things he has not done. He has told a falsehood to avoid losing the good opinion of those over him—of his parents, or masters, or employers; but the actual effect of the falsehood is that, in a very short time, he loses the good opinion of all his superiors, and is despised by them: how can they fail to despise one whom they cannot trust for a moment? I think every one who is in the habit of untruthfulness would admit in a very short time that the result of all his ingenuity in falsehood had been to lower him very much in the opinion of every one around him: in short, that it had produced an effect the exact opposite of what was intended.

Take another style of falsehood, and you will find the same thing. A man exaggerates everything he does, and gives a most flourishing and untrue account of himself and all his actions, and is, perhaps, constantly inventing some story or other to gratify his vanity. What he clearly wants is to fill his neighbours with a great admiration for himself and his performances, and to make them listen, with great wonder and attention, to all he has to say. In a very little while, however, people cease to believe a word of all his wonderful stories, and do not pay any attention to what he says, and, instead of looking at him with increased respect, simply treat him with contempt. Here again you see that falsehood has done exactly the reverse of what it was intended to do.

There is another way in which society punishes falsehood, or rather in which falsehood punishes itself. People tell lies that they may get some extra advantage for themselves from others. A man will tell a very plausible tale to get assistance, not one word of which is true. How does this work in the end? The result generally is that no one can help him, or do anything for his permanent assistance. If you have ever tried to help a poor man—to take up zealously the case of some one in great distress, let us suppose—and then have found out that you could not believe a word he said, did you not feel at once that all your efforts to do any good for him would be thrown away? The fact

that he is not to be trusted has put him beyond the reach of assistance from his brethren.

The same thing happens with another kind of falsehood. A child or a young man is very cunning and false, and contrives to elude and deceive all those who are over him, and to give all his superiors a false notion of his character. What is the result? He has shut the door against all improvement; he has closed all the channels by which he might have received information, or advice, or warning, and will suffer, all the days of his life, for the great cleverness with which he succeeded in deceiving others. The one result obtained was that he effectually prevented others from giving him any assistance.

There is another consideration on which I must now dwell, and this is effect of the vice of untruthfulness on the mind and heart of the person who practises it. Let us suppose, for a moment, that falsehood were not a sin against God, and that it did not in any way injure our neighbours or effect our dealings with them, still it would have a most pernicious effect upon ourselves. Our Lord says: "Beware, ye, of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (St. Luke xii. 1). The Pharisees had a great many excellent qualities; they had piety of a sort, and much zeal and self-denial, but these good qualities were all spoiled by this leaven of hypocrisy. They were full of false pretences; they professed to have one object, and they had another; they said one thing, and meant another; and these false pretences ruined everything they attempted, and made them odious in the sight of God. St. Paul says: "Know you not that a little leaven corrupteth the whole mass? Purge out the old leaven, that you may be unleavened: for Christ, our pasch, is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I. Cor. v. 6). A little leaven is enough to corrupt the whole mass, and a very little insincerity and untruthfulness of character is sufficient to spoil all the best qualities of the human soul. The habit of untruth is an intellectual injury, to begin with. Your understanding was given you to enable you to appreciate and value truth; that you might distinguish accurately between truth and falsehood; that you might reject whatever was untrue. If you employ your intellect in devising ways to conceal the truth and make what is false appear to be true, you cannot fail, by degrees, to create a real mental confusion between truth and falsehood. This is abundantly exemplified in practice: take almost any one who has been long in the habit of false speaking, you will see that he has almost lost the power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

He makes you a series of excuses, but hardly knows himself how much of them is true, and how much false; he tells you a long story, but perhaps he would himself be puzzled to say what had really happened, and what was his own invention. A man like this clearly has injured his own mental faculties by continued untruth. It is the same thing with the heart. A man ought, by his nature, not only to be keen in distinguishing the the truth, but ought to love the truth, and hate falsehood. "O ye sons of men! how long will you be dull of heart? why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv. 3). If a man accustoms himself to falsehood, and has it always on his lips, how can he have any love for truth? It is clear the habit in which he indulges will soon corrupt his heart, and he will become indifferent to truth; he will cease to have the love and respect which every one ought to have for truth in itself. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and lying lips cannot fail to make a deceitful heart.

The leaven of hypocrisy and untruthfulness very soon infests the whole being, and influences all the actions. If you begin by being untruthful and insincere in your intercourse with men, you will very likely become insincere and hypocritical even in your dealings with Almighty God. If a man has accustomed himself to deceit he cannot be quite straightforward in anything: half his religion is a sham; he does not mean what he says in his prayers, and his aspirations and promises to Almighty God are all more or less insincere.

A man begins by deceiving all around him, but he generally finishes by deceiving himself also; he is so accustomed to make excuses that, he is always calling evil good, and wrong right, and contrives to delude even himself as to his own conscience, and gets into that dangerous state against which the Psalmist prays when he says: "Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins" (Ps. cxl. 4).

When a man gets into this state his good resolutions and promises are all delusive, and have no effect but to complete his own self-deception. "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is in vain" (St. James i. 26).

When our Lord's enemies came to tempt Him, they said: "Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man, for Thou dost not regard the person of man" (St. Matt. xxii. 16). Here, my dear brethren, is the model which all Christians ought to imitate. We should love truth in our own hearts, not for any worldly advantage or profit that it may bring with it, but for

itself, because it is dear to that God who is truth itself; and we must speak it on all occasions, great and small. We must not "regard the person of men"—that is, we must not allow any consideration of their favour or disfavour, their smiles or their frowns, the hope of their approbation or the fear of their hard words, to turn us away from the path of integrity and truthfulness. It ought to be our ambition so to act that, whatever else our enemies may say against us, they shall be obliged to bear witness to us, as they did to our Master, that we are "true speakers," following the way of God in truth, and that, where conscience is concerned, we "do not regard the person of men." Amen.

SERMON LXI.

Evil Speaking.

"Refrain your tongue from detraction, for an obscure speech shall not go for nought; and the mouth that belieth killeth the soul" (Wis. i. 11).

THE sins of the tongue, by which men injure their neighbours, are closely connected with the vice of lying, and it is of these principally that I mean to speak to-day. Such sins may be considered as coming under two of the commandments; they are a wrong and an injustice to others, and, as such, are forbidden by the Seventh Commandment; and they are sins which generally involve some degree of falsehood, so that they are considered as belonging to the eighth. The Catechism says: "Calumny, detraction, and tale-bearing, and any words which injure our neighbour's character, are forbidden by the Eighth Commandment."

It is hardly necessary to speak of the evil of these sins, since everybody knows that they are one of the great pests of society, and the cause of half the troubles of the world. If you speak in such a manner as to injure a neighbour's character, you do him an injustice; but that is only a part of the harm done. You wound his feelings, and give a degree of pain which no ordinary injustice would inflict. Besides this, you have probably set on foot some quarrel of which it is impossible to see the end, for we all know how bitter is the feeling which people have against those who have "belied them," and how hard a thing it is to forgive.

There are two distinct sins of this character, of which the first is the sin of calumny. Calumny means telling a lie to injure your neighbour—falsely accusing him of some crime. In this one act, as I have before said, two sins are contained: it is a theft and a lie. You take away your neighbour's most precious property—his good name—and you do it by falsehood. I need say nothing about the baseness of those who maliciously calumniate: that is, of those who intentionally blacken their neighbour's character by falsehood, for the sake of doing him harm: these are, of course, the worst, but they are not the only calumniators. Those who tell lies of their neighbours, either to excuse themselves or out of carelessness, do nearly or quite as much harm. Many people,

in their eagerness to excuse themselves, do not scruple to lay blame on others, or cause the blame of what they have done to be imputed to others. There are some again—and, indeed, a great many—who are calumniators out of mere carelessness. They speak evil of their neighbours, and make accusations against them, without caring whether their words injure their neighbours or not, or taking the trouble to consider whether what they say is, or is not, true. If you say something about your neighbour in this manner, which does him an injury, and which, on examination, turns out to be an untruth, you cannot doubt that you have been guilty of the sin of calumny, and have incurred a serious responsibility before God. It is no excuse to say that you never *meant* to harm your neighbour, and that you *supposed* that what you said was true—or didn't think about it : you are responsible for your words, and for the unjust injury which they inflict.

There are many classes of people who are guilty of calumny to a greater or less degree. Those who *invent* lies of their neighbours, of course, come the first ; but those who exaggerate are not very far off. They hear stories, true or false, and then improve upon them a little ; they make them a little more pointed and *telling*—they add a few details which they think were, *perhaps*, true, and so touch up the story, and send it on, greatly improved and much more effective. What is this but real lying and calumny, if you would only call things by their right names? Is the person who has thus improved and embellished the story much less guilty than the original inventor? Those who hand on bad stories about their neighbours cannot be excused from the sin of calumny, even if they tell them correctly, if they have not taken any pains to find out whether such tales are true or false. If you pass on a story to some one else you give it an additional authority, and make yourself responsible for it ; if, all the while, the story is a falsehood, and, with a little trouble and consideration, you might have known that it was a falsehood, you certainly share in the guilt of calumny.

Detraction is a sin which is very closely allied to calumny, although it does not include the sin of falsehood. Detraction means telling the truth about your neighbour when it is injurious to his character, and you have no sufficient reason for speaking. There is an old proverb which says: "The greater the truth, the greater the libel." A true accusation, or one which contains a good deal of truth, is much more injurious to any one than a story which is utterly false. If you are able to deny a thing entirely, and to say that it is a lie from beginning to end, it is comparatively easy to defend yourself ; but if you are forced to admit that the story is true, or partly true, you cannot escape,

and, therefore, your accuser has really injured you more by his truth than a dozen people could have done by *mere* lying.

If you injure your neighbour by speaking ill of him it is no excuse that what you say is true ; you may *not* tell the truth to the disadvantage of others without a very good reason. Supposing, therefore, that you happen to learn some secret connected with your neighbour's character—you would be guilty of a great sin of detraction if you spoke about it to others; you would have done him a wrong, because he has a right that his secrets should not be told without necessity.

There are, of course, circumstances which may give you a right to say what you know ; it may be necessary for your own protection or the sake of others. If a man set up in business in your neighbourhood, and you had reason to know that he was an impostor and a swindler, and was likely to injure other people, it is clear that you would have a perfect right to speak out; and this example illustrates a great many cases. You are not bound to be silent about matters of public interest, or about things which are already tolerably well known, but you may not speak of secret failings, or sins, or misfortunes of others, unless you have some distinct and sufficient reason for doing so.

When I speak about things which injure a neighbour's character, I mean not only sins, but all those things which are likely to be injurious or painful to him if spoken of—such things as faults of character, defects, misfortunes, things likely to render him an object of ridicule to others. Christian charity obliges us to be silent about such things, and not to injure our neighbour by mentioning them without very sufficient reason.

St. James says: "Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger" (St. James i. 19); and there is no doubt that the great way to avoid sins of calumny and detraction is by being "slow to speak," and avoiding, as far as possible, unnecessary conversation about our neighbours. The habit of talking about the faults of others is generally a sign of idleness and vacuity of mind, and those who are much given to conversation of this sort are like those of whom St. Paul says: "And withal being idle, they learn to go about from house to house, and are not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (I. Tim. v. 13).

We cannot always help speaking of our neighbours, however, so we must learn to speak in a proper and Christian way about them. To do this, we must take care to be very exact in our statements, and not to say one word more than we *know* to

be true, and, besides this, to speak kindly and charitably of them. We never can be sure that we know the whole story, and there are often palliating circumstances and excuses, even in the worst cases, which have never come to our knowledge, and, therefore, we ought always to be a little reserved in our judgments.

There are always two ways of looking at the conduct of others: you may hope for the best, and try to put the best construction on it, and see it in the most favourable light; or you may secretly, perhaps unconsciously, hope for the worst, and make things as bad as you can. St. Paul says: "Charity is patient, is kind . . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I. Cor. xiii. 4). It is not uncommon to find people who have the habit of slightly depreciating every one they speak about; if you are long in their company you feel that every person mentioned has been a little lowered in your estimation, and that something unfavourable or slighting has been said of nearly all those upon whom the conversation has turned. Nothing can produce a worse impression or do more harm than this tone of conversation, and, therefore, every one should be on his guard against falling into it.

There is another fault which is almost worse than speaking ill of your neighbour, and that is mischief-making. "He that soweth discord among brethren" is put by the Holy Scripture in the most prominent place amongst those things which "the Lord hateth" and "His soul detesteth," and detraction would do comparatively little harm if it were not for the mischief-makers. There are some people who seem to find a pleasure in going from one person to another to repeat all the unpleasant things which have happened, and all the disagreeable things that have been said. Such people put on a fine appearance of candour; they "merely tell you for your good," and so forth, whereas what has been said generally matters very little, if there is no "tattler" and "busybody" to report it, and turn it into a cause of quarrel.

Mischief-making sometimes takes the form of "telling tales," and sometimes of reporting speeches. It is, of course, occasionally necessary to tell of the wrong-doing of other people, either for their correction or to provide against injury which may be caused by them, but it is a thing always to be avoided, unless there is some real necessity.

The other form of mischief-making is *very* seldom necessary, and scarcely ever fails to do harm. It is almost impossible to report speeches fairly, because the meaning of them depends so

much upon the rest of the conversation, and upon the tone and spirit in which they are said, that they generally look much more serious when repeated by a third person. Trifling things are apt to appear important when repeated, and, if really serious, the injury is greatly increased by repetition. We ought always to check a tendency to making mischief, either in ourselves or in others. If unpleasant speeches are reported to us, it is generally because we encourage others to be tale-bearers; and if we all disliked tale-bearers as much as we should, there would be very little mischief made.

There is another point to be considered with regard to sins of calumny and detraction, and that is, the duty of making restitution. These sins are acts of injustice, and therefore the Catechism tells us that "he who has injured his neighbour by speaking ill of him must make him satisfaction, and restore his good name as far as he can." He must do "what he can" to make up to his neighbour for the injury inflicted—but that unfortunately is, generally speaking, very little. It is very easy to take away another's good name, but it is a very difficult matter to restore it. If a distinct falsehood has been told, it is, of course, possible to contradict it afterwards; but, as a rule, all that you can say in atonement will have very little effect—the injury is done, and only time and patience will repair it. It is necessary to use great prudence in all attempts to restore your neighbour's good name, as there is a great chance of doing more harm than good, and it is generally the wisest course to say nothing. There are, however, some cases in which, by detraction, people injure their neighbours, not only in good name, but also in their property; if, for instance, you were to say something seriously affecting the character of a man of business, you would not only hurt his good name, but, very likely, injure his business. In all such cases you are bound to make a money restitution for the money injury inflicted.

I will conclude the subject by saying that whilst people ought to be careful not to injure their neighbours by speaking ill of them, on the other hand we ought not to be too sensitive about every ill-natured thing that is said. Generally speaking, it matters very much less than we suppose, and it is only vanity that makes us think so much of it. We fancy that people care a great deal about us and our characters, whereas, as a rule, they do not take the trouble to think of us at all, and they very soon forget all about it, if only we will let them.

I have a few words to add on the more general subject of the Eighth Commandment, of which calumny and detraction form a part. I have spoken of the vice of lying, and I have tried to

show what a disgrace and misfortune it is to have the habit of untruthfulness. How is this habit to be avoided? How can it be cured?

In the first place, it must be remembered that strict truthfulness is not a quality that comes by itself—it is a virtue to be gained by prayer and by practice.

Truth and falsehood are, to a great extent, matters of habit; every lie leads to other lies, and makes truth more difficult, whereas every time that you exert yourself to make an act of moral courage, by telling the truth in spite of difficulties, you render it easier to be truthful on the next occasion. People often have a general intention of being truthful, but then the temptation comes just to tell a lie "this once" to escape from a perplexity, and the moment never arrives when truthfulness can be acquired without a great and difficult act of moral courage.

Those who would avoid the vice of lying must cultivate a great love for the virtue of truth, or else they will never bring themselves to make the sacrifices necessary to obtain it. If you have a great idea of the beauty of truthfulness in itself, and think how pleasing it is to God, and think, moreover, of the great advantages which it brings to all who practise it, both in this world and the next, you will find it easy enough to be truthful. Those who really love truth never tamper with falsehood—they never make light of it or consider it as a joke, or call it by wrong names: a lie is to them always a lie, and always an object of detestation, under whatever circumstances it may be told. A love of truth, moreover, includes some accuracy of mind. If you do not take much trouble to distinguish between truth and falsehood, it is not likely that you will make any great sacrifice to tell the truth even when you know what it is.

The most fertile of all sources of falsehood, however, is perhaps the habit of making excuses. A person who is always excusing himself is *never* very truthful, and, therefore, those who wish to acquire the habit of strict truthfulness must be very much on their guard against excuses, and must make up their minds to be silent, and allow themselves to be blamed rather than make thoughtless and inaccurate excuses for their conduct.

If we wish, however, to gain the virtue of truthfulness, we must rely, most of all, upon the assistance of Almighty God, and trust to the use of prayer and the sacraments. St. James says: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given to him" (St. James i. 5). And it is the same with all other virtues. If you find it hard to tell the truth in circumstances of difficulty,

make it a matter of prayer, and of self-examination, and God will give you the grace to overcome the difficulties.

I must conclude by speaking of a subject in connection with truthfulness, which appears to me to be of very great importance —and that is, of the duty of teaching children to speak the truth; and I do this even at the risk of repeating a good deal that I have said in a former sermon. A large proportion of the habitual lying and general carelessness about truth which we find in the world comes from the bad teaching of parents in childhood, or the want of any teaching at all—and, perhaps, from the want of ordinary care on the part of teachers at school afterwards.

All reasonably good parents know the value of truth, and are quite aware that, of all the good things they could give to their children, a habit of strict truthfulness would be the most valuable; and yet, whilst they spend time and money in teaching them all sorts of other things, they do not take the least trouble to see that they are acquiring habits of truth and straightforwardness. I suppose this is because they have a notion that truthfulness comes of itself, and they cannot believe that their little innocent children can ever be guilty of falsehood. This is a fatal mistake. You may be sure that your children have, by nature, the same faults, and perversities, and weaknesses as the rest of mankind—and, therefore, that if you do not take the trouble to teach them to be good they are very likely to be bad.

You must not, therefore, take their goodness for granted in *anything*, but must apply yourself diligently to showing them the way of virtue. To begin with, you must not teach them to lie. I do not mean in so many words, but by treating a lie as a small thing. People sometimes carelessly speak of a "trifling" lie as a joke, or, perhaps, rather as a clever thing, or a thing, which is no great harm in some cases; and they forget that their children will learn that lesson easily enough. Sometimes parents will even use their children as instruments of deceit, and put a lie into their mouths, by making them repeat excuses and histories which are untrue. Sometimes, again, fathers and mothers will not scruple to tell little convenient lies to their children, or in their presence, and they fancy that the children will not find them out. Unfortunately, however, the inherent tendency of human nature renders them very sharp in such things, and makes them exceedingly apt pupils in deceit, and they will very soon learn the lesson their parents have taught them, and practise it assiduously for themselves.

It is necessary, besides this, to speak to them of the importance

of telling the truth—how pleasing truthfulness is to God, and how hateful any kind of lie is to Him. These things are very obvious, but the children do not know them unless they are told, or know them, only in a vague and uncertain way by the light of nature. Parents are sometimes shy of speaking quietly and gravely of such things to their children; it seems to them a kind of preaching, which they do not like; but it is very necessary, notwithstanding, and a few grave words from their parents will often produce more effect than all the eloquent sermons they are destined to hear in after life. The next thing obviously is, not to frighten them or hurry them into falsehood. If you give way to unreasonable anger, and are very harsh and stern about trifling faults they commit, you cannot be surprised if they get into the way of telling lies of excuse; you cannot expect any wonderful moral courage from young children—it is a quality which they have as yet to learn and practise, and, therefore, you must be patient and forbearing. Again, you must not hurry them; many a child would tell the truth if allowed a few moments for consideration, and questioned quietly and gently, but is hurried into telling a lie, and, when once committed to it, is almost necessarily led on to many more.

Boys and girls are, moreover, constantly led into falsehood by foolish or unreasonable questions. Their parents will sometimes ask questions which, they ought to know, *cannot* be answered, or which it requires an unusual degree of fortitude to answer correctly. "*Why* did you do so-and-so?" Probably there is *no* reason, or no presentable reason, to give—what can the poor child do but invent a reason, if such a question is insisted upon? Again, parents sometimes ask questions which the children will feel to be unfair, or which it is against their sense of honour to answer truly. This applies, perhaps, still more to schoolmasters. To save themselves trouble, they will sometimes ask elaborate questions involving other people, which cannot be answered without betraying companions, and doing other things which seem dishonourable and unfair. Such inconsiderate questioning is often the foundation of a habit of deceit. The old proverb: "Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies," with a little modification, is not a bad guide for parents and masters. Do not ask too many questions, and do not ask them without considering whether they can be easily and fairly answered, and you will escape much danger of teaching your children to lie.

The next important thing in educating children to speak the truth is to place confidence in them. If you do not trust them

or value what they say, you cannot expect them to take much trouble about veracity, as the self-respect which they ought to have, is necessarily wounded by unreasonable distrust. On the other hand, the trust you place in them must be a *reasonable*, and not a blind trust. If your children know that you always take for granted that they are telling the truth whatever they say—if you never take the trouble to test their accuracy, and always implicitly believe them in a conflict of testimony, it is often too great a temptation for human weakness, and your blind confidence may easily lead them into a course of deceit.

If you want your children to speak the truth you must encourage them to be open with you. If they once learn to have confidence in you, so that they are not afraid to communicate to you their feelings and ideas, and can trust you in all their troubles, there is not much difficulty in making them truthful. This openness of character, without disguise or concealment—the virtue of simple truthfulness—is one of the special beauties of childhood. "And in their mouth there was found no lie, for they are without spot before the throne of God" (Ap. xiv. 5). This should be the characteristic of all children, but it is very often blighted by carelessness and hastiness or over-severity, by cutting words and ridicule, or by want of proper encouragement. You cannot *command* openness on the part of your children—you must be content to gain it by patience and encouragement. I was before speaking of the importance of accuracy of mind, and here naturally it is in the power of parents to help their children.

It is easy for their elders—for those, at least, who have their confidence—to lead children into the habit of considering what they say, and of avoiding exaggeration, and, in short, it is easy to help them to acquire all those mental qualities which are necessary for truthfulness. A child who has been in the habit of free conversation with judicious parents and elders can hardly fail to get into a habit of accurate speech.

Above all, however, my dear brethren, one thing is necessary, and that is never to pass over a lie of any sort without rebuke. It is foolish, indeed, to speak to your children as if a lie were always a sin of the blackest kind—a thing which was quite unheard of—which was a lasting disgrace, and so forth; exaggeration of this kind always does harm, and easily has the effect of making them hypocrites, and shutting the door against repentance; but you must always show them that a lie pains *you*, not because it has done some harm, and caused mischief, but because it *is* a lie; you must show the effect that it has in lowering the person who tells it, and destroying confidence, and, above all,

that it is a sin against Almighty God—one which requires real repentance and contrition.

I must conclude what I have been saying on this most important subject of truth by a few words about the scandal it causes. I suppose that scarcely any kind of sin committed by religious people does so much harm as sins of untruthfulness. Truth is a natural virtue, and very strict truthfulness is very often found amongst many who, unfortunately, are indifferent to religion. When people of this kind hear of anything like laxity about truth amongst Catholics, either of laxity in theory, or of carelessness in practice, they are very apt to assume that these faults come from religion, instead of being, as they are, the result of the weakness and perversity of human nature. Such sins therefore have, more than others, a tendency to turn people against our holy faith. This is true at all times, and particularly true in our own time and country. God is the very truth, and requires that His children should love the truth and speak the truth. "God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth" (St. John iv. 24).

SERMON LXII.

Bad Thoughts.

"The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21).

WE all of us have abundant experience, my dear brethren, of the truth contained in these words of Holy Scripture, and we know only too well how difficult it is to discipline and control our own hearts. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments treat specially of sins of the heart—of bad thoughts and evil desires. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." We cannot pay too much attention to the discipline of our own hearts: they are, as I have before said, the special kingdom of God within us, of which He has made us, and us only, masters. In this interior kingdom we are supreme lords, no one can interfere with us, and with God's grace, we are always able to produce good fruit in it, if we will. All virtue and all vice proceed from the heart, since external acts are dependent upon the will for their goodness or wickedness.

Our Lord says to the Pharisee: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness" (St. Matt. xxiii. 27). These strong words apply to those who do not endeavour to discipline their own hearts and keep them pure and virtuous; their outward lives may be all that is excellent in the sight of men, but before God they are mere "whited sepulchres."

This, however, is not to be made an excuse for neglecting external duties. People sometimes say: "How can I do or say such and such a thing, when I cannot really feel it? How can I pay marks of respect, or show external signs of forgiveness, with my present dispositions? It is mere hypocrisy!" All this is simply an excuse; if you make up your mind to do what is right because it is your duty, your feelings will soon follow as far as is necessary, and you need not be afraid of hypocrisy.

The first subject to consider is that of "rash judgment," which the Catechism treats under the Eighth Commandment. What is rash judgment? It is not rash judgment to decide that a thing is wrong, which common sense tells you *is* wrong.

Christian charity never obliges you to call wrong, right; or bad, good; and it is not rash judgment to suspect a person of a fault when there is good ground for suspicion Rash judgment means judging unnecessarily and harshly, and without any reasonable grounds for deciding. We should try to avoid judging our neighbours, for our Lord says: "Judge not, that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 1). It is very seldom that we are really called upon to judge; no one wants our opinion, and we are very incompetent to form an opinion in most cases; why, then, should we be in such a hurry to decide? "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own lord he standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv. 4).

You find people who are always ready to decide on any point, and never stop to consider whether there is any sufficient proof to justify such a decision: such people never dream of suspending their judgment till they are sufficiently informed, and are so far from wishing to hear both sides of a question, that they never listen patiently to anything that does not agree with the view they have already taken. Can any judgment be more rash or uncharitable? If we are to judge, let us be merciful judges, and consider the excuses that may be made for others, and give them the benefit of the doubts that arise, and, at least, let us make allowance for the weakness of human nature. "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). This is the way in which we ought to judge—"the spirit of meekness," lest we "also be tempted."

One common kind of rash judgment is that of *generalising* too much, and not only condemning your neighbour for what you have reason to know he has done, but taking it for granted that he has done a great deal more also, for which he deserves condemnation.

I now come to speak of sins of thought generally, and shall find it necessary to dwell in detail upon some of the more dangerous kinds. It is hardly necessary to say that a sin of thought may be a grievous sin, even though it never appears in word or action, and has no outward expression whatever. The Holy Scripture tells us that "evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 26), and "perverse thoughts separate from God." If, for instance, a bad thought occurs to you, and you realize that it is unlawful and odious to Almighty God, and your conscience points out that it is your clear duty to reject the idea, and turn your mind away from it—yet, in spite of this

warning, you choose deliberately to cherish the thought and delight in it, you cannot doubt that you have rebelled against God just as much as you would have done by persisting in an external action which you knew to be forbidden.

Sins of thought are of two kinds—they are either intentions and desires, or they are *complacencies*—that is, taking pleasure in unlawful thoughts. If you make up your mind that you *will* do something when the opportunity arises, or else that you *would* do it if circumstances allowed you, you are guilty of the thing itself in the sight of God, by your evil desire and intention, since, as our Lord says: "But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (St. Matt. v. 28). There may, however, be no intention at all, and the thoughts may have no reference to the future, and then the sin is one of complacency—that is, the unlawful object to which you attach yourself, and for which you leave Almighty God, is the wicked thought itself, and the satisfaction you derive from contemplating and cherishing it.

People often go on committing sinful acts, and, in a way, are sorry for the wrong they do, but never overcome their sinful habits, because they never take the trouble to find out and check the inward fault from which it arises. It is very important, therefore, to dwell upon interior dispositions—not only for themselves, but that we may be able to resist the actual sins to which they lead.

Let us begin with interior pride, which is the source of a great many sins. The Holy Scripture says: "Pride is hateful before God and men. . . . . The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God, because his heart is departed from Him that made him; for pride is the beginning of all sin; he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end" (Ecclus. x. 7–14). Pride, in its highest degree, is a worship of self: it consists of an inordinate and unreasonable admiration of one's self, and of one's own powers of body and mind; it contains, also, self-sufficiency, or too great a belief in oneself, and independence of all others, and goes on to a worship of self, or making everything give way, and pay homage to ourselves. It is clear that such a feeling as this, if carried very far, and allowed to rule, is nothing else than idolatry: it is inconsistent with the worship of God, because you cannot set yourself up in God's throne and at the same time worship Him. It is from this that all rebellions against God have sprung, and do spring to the present day. "Of old time thou hast broken My yoke, thou hast burst My bands, and thou saidst, I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). Such has been the conduct of men towards God, and its

cause is plain—they set up themselves, and their own dignity and independence of thought and action, as gods, and, therefore, rebel. Pride shows itself in a number of ways; if you are always thinking of yourself, and find it difficult to believe that you are in the wrong, and will not be spoken to, and are unreasonably impatient of reproof, or are very selfish, and want to make everything give way to your wishes, you may be sure that these are the results of a self-worship, of which you are, perhaps, carcely conscious.

And yet pride is not all bad. A proper appreciation of the dignity of the nature which God has given you, and of the high destinies to which you are called, is the best preservative against sin, and especially against the meaner and baser kinds of sin. A man who has this true notion of his own dignity—the pride of the saints—will consider earthly and passing things beneath him, as St. Stanislaus used to say: "I am not born for present things, but for the future." This is the true pride which Christians should encourage—the pride that makes them despise all that is base and trivial, and push on boldly to the glorious end which their Creator has appointed for them.

Vanity is something different—it is an idolatry of the good opinion, or the homage of men. We all naturally desire the good-will and approbation of others, and, within its proper limits, it is a useful quality; but it is the source of untold sins if not duly restrained. We are all very much prone to vanity, and scarcely any age or station is free from it. It shows itself in dress and display of all kinds, in the way in which people speak of themselves, and sometimes, unfortunately, in their manner of speaking against their neighbours. It shows itself in most curious and contradictory ways, and even in the most minute and trifling affairs of human life. There is scarcely anything too small for the attention of a man who has given way to his vanity, or too trivial to gratify his craving for admiration; he will be vain of almost anything, and there is nothing he will not do to attract the applause of men, or some kind of notice from them.

It is quite natural for us to like praise, and to value the esteem and admiration of others, and of itself there is no harm in it; on the contrary, a desire of the approbation of others is often a most useful feeling and a great assistance to us in overcoming the weakness of nature, should we be called upon to do heroic deeds, and perform difficult duties; and with this object, no doubt, the feeling was so deeply rooted in our nature.

If, however, you take delight in the applause of men, and those qualities by which it is gained, so as to make them an *end* and a motive of action, instead of a mere auxiliary to higher

motives, you are guilty of vanity, and are in danger of being led into serious harm; still more, if you allow the admiration of men to be your guide in deciding between right and wrong, and to cause you to go against the secret dictates of your conscience. Of all the guides that could be found the approbation and praise and good-will of men is the most fallacious; and, indeed, St. James warns us against following it in these very strong words: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God" (St. James iv. 4).

If, then, my dear brethren, we would rule the little world within us, and keep it spotless before God, we must be on our guard against these twin vices of pride and vanity; we must always suspect ourselves of them, and, perhaps, we have all the more reason for doing so if we are unconscious of their existence; we must be determined not to make idols either of our own excellence or of the esteem of men, and not to be guided in our conduct by the love of these things. Such a determination, however, is not quite enough; these feelings are so strong within us that we must be prepared to mortify them in some degree, or else we can never keep them in due control. No one can ever be reasonably humble unless he compels himself sometimes to bear humiliation, and no one can ever conquer vanity without making some sacrifice for the purpose.

The next class of bad thoughts are those which are evil, because they are dangerous; these are idle thoughts, trifling thoughts, which are "to no purpose." The harm of these is chiefly negative—that is, they leave the mind exposed to danger and temptation. There are a great many people who are thinking all day long, and yet do not supply themselves with anything worth thinking about. Their minds then become like millstones which keep on working without any corn to grind—they grind down and wear out themselves. Those who allow their minds to be idle in this fashion are always either building castles in the air, or else dwelling perpetually upon trifles—sometimes upon trifling compliments and satisfactions they have received—sometimes upon equally trifling disputes; and they keep on fighting their battles over again in imagination—sometimes in foolish curiosity about their neighbours, by which they are generally landed in rash judgment; sometimes in imaginary rebellions against authority, or imaginary quarrels with their neighbours, which often are nearly as bad as real quarrels. Almost any real and substantial subject of thought would be less injurious than this idleness of mind, because idleness is the fruitful source of almost every kind of temptation. "Behold

this was the iniquity of Sodom, thy sister ,pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters" (Ez. xvi. 49). You see that mere idleness is put by the Holy Scripture in very bad company, as one of the great causes of the most shameful sins.

Again, our Lord describes the devil going out of a man, and coming back again to the house whence he had gone out, and "coming he findeth it empty, swept and garnished: then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is made worse than the first" (St. Matt. xii. 44). These words seem to be a clear warning against vacuity of mind—against the danger of having an imagination engaged upon nothing serious, but filled with trivial things and foolish things.

It remains for me to treat of the most serious sins of thought—that is, of those which are always and necessarily sinful. These may be classed under the heads of rebellion, malice, and sensuality—amongst which are included the greatest sins which men can commit. We are all by nature inclined to rebel—in the first place, to resist our lawful superiors upon earth, and then to rebel against Almighty God. Even those who do not actually rebel, very often incur the guilt of rebellion by indulging in rebellious thoughts—that is, they rebel in heart, though they cannot do so in action. It would be well if we always had before our eyes the words of Holy Scripture:

"It is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey" (I. Kings xv. 23). If an actual rebellion is so great a sin, we may be sure that an internal rebellion is also grievously sinful before God. Rebellious thoughts do not generally go so far as an intention of actually refusing to obey, but they usually take the form of discontent and complaint, of unwilling and ungracious submission. Sometimes people murmur at the direct dispensations of Providence against the condition of life in which they are placed, or the accidental inconveniences which occur to them; sometimes it is an *indirect* rebellion by murmuring at those whom God has willed to be their superiors. St. Paul says: "Neither do you murmur, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (I. Cor. x. 10).

It is not enough to be obedient, unless we try also to make our obedience willing and cheerful; "for God loves a cheerful giver" (II. Cor. ix. 7), and a moody sullen submission is not likely to win favour in His sight. A spirit of resignation is a sign of gratitude to God. Those who are really grateful for the good things they have received from God can easily bear the

trials which His Providence sends; "if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil things?" (Job ii. 10). If, therefore, you find yourself murmuring, and almost rebelling, at the crosses and trials of life, you have reason to fear that you are wanting in proper gratitude to God. It is very easy for us to take, as a matter of course, all the favours and blessings which God gives us, as if they hardly deserved any thankfulness, and then to complain bitterly if anything is denied us; but such a disposition is odious in the sight of God, and the surest possible way of shutting the door against future favours.

Try, then, my dear brethren, to cultivate a thankful spirit; think of the many blessings God has bestowed on you, and not of the few that He has refused you; remember also that you have nothing to give Him in return, but a grateful and contented heart, and then you will find it easy enough to check thoughts of murmuring and rebellion, should they arise within your minds.

Next to rebellious thoughts against God come malicious thoughts against our brethren, about which I have already in part spoken; envious thoughts, angry thoughts, and revengeful thoughts. Envy is the vice which makes people hate their neighbours on account of their good qualities of body or of mind, or of the happiness and advantages which they possess: sometimes—and this is the worst kind of envy—it is hatred of others, because they are superior to ourselves in virtue and favour with God. Envy is essentially a malicious feeling; it is not a mere admiration of the excellence of others, and a desire to equal, or even to surpass it—it is a hatred of them for possessing it, and a wish to injure them, on account of the good qualities they possess. Jealousy is another form of the same vice: it is envy of the *favour* given to other people: you do not like to hear others praised, or to see any marks of favour bestowed upon them, and are inclined to hate those who are much esteemed by men. Covetousness is an unjust desire of the property of others—that is, not merely a desire to have such things, but an inordinate desire—a desire to have them unjustly, and to the detriment of our neighbour. This sin of covetousness is so important a sin, that it is the special object of the Tenth Commandment, "which forbids all envious and covetous thoughts, and unjust desires of our neighbour's goods and profits." Mere wishing for things, even if they are the property of others, is not the sin—but *unjust* wishing for them, that is setting your heart upon things so as to desire to have them unlawfully, and to the injury of others. These three sins—envy, jealousy, and covetousness—are

much of the same class, and consist in an unjust craving after what rightfully belongs to our neighbour, and a desire to take it away—whether it be his good qualities, or his favour with men, or his worldly goods. These feelings are part of the natural selfishness of man, and are to be found everywhere, and from them spring a large part of the miseries which afflict the world. If once you give way to any of these feelings, there is an end of peace both for yourself and others. An envious or jealous man, or a covetous man, can never be at peace; whatever his own possessions may be, there will always be something of his neighbour's which is a pain to him; he will be always wanting something more, and always desiring to get something which belongs to others; and this something will prevent him from enjoying what he already possesses.

A covetous, greedy man is always, more or less, like Haman, who, as the Scripture tells, was wretched and discontented, in the midst of all the honours that could be heaped upon him, because the Jew Mardochai, who sat by the gate, did not pay any attention to him. It is quite necessary for us to guard against this fault, to detect and resist the secret repining at the good of others in whatever shape it comes, and to *compel* ourselves to rejoice, and not to grieve, at the prosperity of our neighbours, even when it seems to surpass our own.

We also offend against our neighbours in our own hearts by indulging in thoughts of hatred and revenge. These thoughts are perhaps not generally so active and troublesome as jealous thoughts, but they lie deeper, and are even more grievous; so that St. John says: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I. St. John iii. 15). Hatred is the sin by which you exclude any one, in your own mind, from the ordinary rights of Christian charity, and take delight in the evil you find in him and the misfortune which comes to him. The sin is so serious, because it is the exact opposite of charity, which, as St. Paul tells us, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (I. Cor. xiii. 6). The spirit of revenge goes farther still, and not only excludes from charity and rejoices in evil, but it also compasses and procures the evil, or, at any rate, wishes to do so.

The remaining sins of thought are those spoken of in the Ninth Commandment, which are "impure thoughts and desires, and all wilful pleasure in the irregular motions of the flesh." Amongst these may be included all kinds of improper and sensual thoughts of forbidden objects, and all the coarse and dangerous ideas which lead to them.

Besides these serious sins of thought there are many smaller faults, which sometimes have great influence on a man's exterior

life. You may have a habit of peevishness—that is, the habit of being annoyed, and showing your annoyance about trifles; or you may be over susceptible, and much too easily offended; or, again, ungracious in manner, because you will not take the trouble to think of the effect your words and demeanour will have on the feelings of your neighbours. These faults of external behaviour, and most others, depend upon some little fault of mind and heart which might easily be remedied, but which, as it is, does very serious harm.

In fighting against bad thoughts there are many difficulties to be encountered. The worst ideas and suggestions will sometimes come before your mind, whether you will or not, like clouds passing over the sun, and darkening the earth with their shadows, and you cannot always be certain how far these thoughts are your own fault, so that you will often be in anxiety about them. Nevertheless, you must persevere, and never be discouraged, remembering that the worst thoughts cannot sully the purity of your soul except by your own full consent, and that, so long as you continue honestly to wish to drive away evil, it can never really harm you, however strong a hold it may seem, for the moment, to have on your imagination.

The Psalmist says: "Create a clean heart in me, O God! and renew a right spirit within my bowels" (Ps. l. 12). If you will only keep your heart strictly guarded, and pure in the sight of God, you need fear no temptation from without. "Be not afraid of their fear, and be not troubled, but sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts" (I. St. Peter iii. 14).

This purity of heart is the one thing to which Almighty God looks, as He says: "Nor do I judge according to the look of man; for man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart (I. Kings xvi. 7); and all holiness must begin from the heart. If you want to resist temptation you must do so in your own thoughts; then you can resist the enemy and conquer him even in the beginning; but if you allow him to take possession of that stronghold you cannot conquer externally, and your victory would be of no avail if you could.

I have now, my dear brethren, completed my short sketch of the Commandments of God; there are many things connected with them which I have passed over, and many on which I have spoken require very much fuller attention; but I have finished the subject for the present, and I can only remind you that it is by these Commandments we must stand or fall, since our Lord says: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments." I will conclude, therefore, with the words of Holy Scripture: "My

son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them in thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck. When thou walkest, let them go with thee: when thou sleepest, let them keep thee: and when thou awakest, talk with them. Because the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. vi. 20).

SERMON LXIII.

The Church's Law.

"Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4).

THE Commandments of God, my dear brethren, do not concern great things only; they are not merely general directions and broad principles, but they come down to the details of everyday life, so as to be our daily guide. So that as the Psalmist says: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. cxviii. 105). In the Old Law Almighty God instructed men Himself as to the manner in which all their duties were to be performed, and explained to them, in the most minute way, how they were to serve Him. In the New Law, however, He has left it, in a great measure, to the Church to give practical directions, and to order the details of His service. We can easily understand the reason of this difference. The Jewish dispensation was for one single people, and the ordinances given to them were mainly intended to keep alive the ancient traditions and expectations till Christ should come; and, therefore, it was desirable that the customs and religious practices of the nation should be fixed as immovably as possible. The Church, on the contrary, was to suit its laws to many different races of men, and to many changing circumstances; and, therefore, although the principles and doctrines were unchangeable, the ways of carrying out those principles were left as elastic as possible, that they might be changed to suit the necessities of mankind.

I propose now to give an explanation of the principal "Commandments of the Church." The first question is of the authority of the Church. On this the Catechism says: "We are bound to obey the Church, because Christ has said to the pastors of the Church, He that heareth you heareth me, and He that despiseth you depiseth me." Our Lord sent His Apostles to teach men, but mere teaching power would have had little effect, and would have been quite insufficient to maintain unity amongst men without authority to command. Christ, therefore, gave them full power to command, and imposed on their hearers the strictest duty of obedience. "As the Father hath sent Me,

I send you." "All power is given to Me in heaven and upon earth."

The Apostles, therefore, insisted on their right to command; and the duty of obedience is an essential part of the duty of men, as members of the Church. Our Lord Himself says: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the publican" (St. Matt. xviii. 17). And when the Church had actually begun its work amongst men, almost its first collective act was to assert its right to lay commands on the faithful. "For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burdens upon you than these necessary things, that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well" (Acts xv. 28).

Some of the "necessary things" were, as we well know, only necessary for a time on account of the existing circumstances, and are, therefore, a good illustration of the nature of the Church's commands. St. Paul urges his disciples, St. Timothy and St. Titus, whom He had appointed to be Bishops, to be firm in insisting on obedience: "These things command and teach. Let no man despsie thy youth" (I. Tim. iv. 11). "These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Tit. ii. 15). Again, St. Paul speaks very strongly to the pastors of the Church at Miletus about the authority committed to them; they were to *rule* the Church of God. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath placed you Bishops, to rule the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28). St. Paul himself, moreover, plainly shows that the power exercised is not one merely of exhortation, but one to be enforced by stern decrees. See his way of dealing with a great and public sinner: "I, indeed, absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, him that hath so done. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I. Cor. v. 3).

There are, then, two sets of Commandments—the "Commandments of God" and the "Precepts of the Church"—and we must now consider the distinctions between them. First, as regards their authority, they rest on precisely the same ground. It would appear at first sight that the precepts of the Church must have much less authority than the commands of God, but in reality they are *all* the commands of God, and

the only distinction between the two classes of laws is, first, the channel by which they are made known to us, and, secondly, the subject matter on which they treat.

Every precept of the Church is in reality a command of God; it is a command given in the name of God, and for the service of God, and by an authority which God has appointed. The only motive which men have for observing the precepts of the Church is obedience to God, and the sin they commit if they disregard them is disobedience to God. When Ananias came to St. Peter with his false pretences, Peter said to him: "Thou hast not lied to men, but to God" (Acts v. 4). And so, if you disobey the laws of the Church, you are disobedient "not to men but to God."

This is true, to a certain extent, of other human laws—of obedience to the commands of parents, and to the laws of the State, and, accordingly, St. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). But other laws are intended not only for the service of God, and obedience to them does rest *only* on obedience to God, so that no human law can be taken as God's command in the direct way in which the Church's law is. The law of the Church, therefore, is a divine law—that is, a law expressly sanctioned by God, and made exclusively for His service, which is made known to us by the will of human superiors appointed by God. There are, however, some important distinctions between this kind of law and that given directly by Almighty God. In the first place, the law of the Church may change; it is sometimes objected that her rules vary at different times and in different countries, or, again, that dispensations are frequently granted. How can a thing that is wrong be made right simply by a decree of the Pope? This is a question often asked, but the answer is perfectly plain. The things in which the Church dispenses are not things wrong in *themselves*, but are only wrong because they are forbidden by authority. The decree of the Church cannot make a thing that is wrong in itself right by dispensation, but it *can* make a forbidden thing lawful by withdrawing the prohibition. The power which makes a regulation can always remove or change it when it thinks fit to do so; an Act of Parliament may make it lawful to do a thing which has been forbidden by Act of Parliament, and a parent may allow a child to do a thing which was strictly forbidden before; in all such cases the withdrawal of the prohibition, in one sense, "makes wrong right," but every one sees the reasonableness of it. It is exactly on the same principle that all ecclesiastical dispensations are given.

It is inherent in the kind of law that it should admit of change, because, as I have said, the power that makes the law must always be able to change it. A law made by men which men could not change would be an intolerable hardship, and it has pleased God to leave the power of making laws with His Church, because it was for the advantage of men to be ruled, not by a hard and fast law, which could never vary or be relaxed, but by one able to adapt itself to the changing circumstances of society.

A law of the Church can *never* be violated without sin, but it is often possible to obtain relaxations of the law from the ecclesiastical authority that made it, and, moreover, circumstances may easily arise which *exempt* us from its observance. This comes from the nature of the things the law affects. The Commandments of God are generally about great principles, which are always true, and which remain unchanged in all cases; but the Precepts of the Church concern positive duties the performance of which must depend upon circumstances. Sometimes it is impossible to observe them, sometimes great evil or inconvenience would be occasioned by their observance. The Church makes its laws for our good, and, therefore, does not intend them to be applied in cases where they might occasion serious inconvenience. Let us take an example of the distinction between these two kinds of law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart;" this is a law of God, and from the nature of it no exemption is ever possible. Nothing can ever make it lawful for us *not* to love the Lord our God. To fast and abstain on certain days is a law of the Church, and we see, in a moment, that circumstances may easily arise which will make it impossible to observe it, or, at least, make the observance of it so difficult and injurious that the law would do much more harm than good.

We are, generally speaking, excused from the Commandments of the Church whenever any serious injury or loss would be caused by keeping them, whereas this very seldom or never happens in the direct laws of God; but this is not because they rest on a different authority, but because they concern duties of a different sort.

On the other hand, the laws of the Church are a special test of obedience and loyalty to God; they are so easily fulfilled, and the temptation to break them is, generally speaking, so small and pitiful, that neglect of them seems to involve a special degree of disloyalty and contempt. When we see people breaking the command of God for the sake of eating and drinking, or to avoid a few minutes' trouble, may we not

apply to them the words of the Lord in the Prophet Ezechiel: "They have violated Me among My people for a handful of barley and a piece of bread" (Ezech. xiii. 19).

There is, moreover, very great spiritual advantage in observing these Commandments faithfully: "in keeping them there is a great reward" (Ps. xviii. 12). They are, as I have said, the best possible means of obedience. Nothing shows the spirit of obedience and keeps the heart of man subject to God so effectually as acts of obedience which are easy in themselves and frequently recurring. The Psalmist says: "Be thou, O my soul, subject to God, for from Him is my patience, for He is my God" (Ps. lxi. 6). There is no doubt that the great temptation of man is to forget the subjection to God in which he ought to live, and the Church's laws are specially valuable because they constantly remind us of it. Again, they often concern comparatively small things, or things which seem to be small, but these small things are ordained as means to lead us to God, and we cannot doubt that when embraced in the spirit of obedience they will have a greater effect in leading us to God than anything we could do for ourselves, and bring with them a greater blessing.

There is, moreover, nothing by which good or bad example is more easily given than by diligence or negligence in the observance of the Commandments of the Church. A Catholic who does not observe them, who, either through carelessness or a disobedient spirit, is seen to disobey these precepts, is a perpetual scandal, and. we may almost say, scatters death around him. His laxity makes others lax, and he teaches the Church's children to disobey her, and makes her enemies despise her. If such a man has a good position, and a good Catholic name, he may do more harm than a dozen professed enemies. On the other hand, if a man is diligent in observing the Commandments; if he will submit to the trifling self-denial they involve, and, still more, is not afraid of the opinions of men, and can stand being laughed at without flinching, he may do incalculable good—and that, too, amongst people whom nothing else will affect. Good example, of this kind particularly, will penetrate where no sermon will reach.

The Catechism explains to us six of the Commandments of the Church—those commandments, that is, which it is necessary for every one to understand. "The first Commandment of the Church is to keep Sundays and Holydays of Obligation holy, by hearing Mass and resting from servile work." Sundays and Holydays of Obligation are classed together, and the duty of keeping the days holy is the same in both cases. Some people will be inclined to say these Holydays are merely instituted by

the Church, whereas the Sunday is the direct appointment of God, so you cannot class them together. It is not so, however. The command in the Decalogue, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day," plainly does not apply to Sunday, because the Sunday is the first day of the week, whereas the Sabbath is the seventh. It is clear that this is not an accident or a miscalculation, but a deliberate change made by the Christian Church. From this we see that the Church of the apostolic times kept the *principle* of the Fourth Commandment by giving one day in seven to the service of God, but considered the law appointing one particular day to be at an end, and therefore chose a new day of sanctification for the Christian people.

Exactly the same sort of substitution has been made with regard to the Holydays. Almighty God commanded His people to observe a number of festival days besides the Sabbath Day, and they were to be kept with the same strictness as that day; these were to be the memorials of His wonderful works, and constantly to remind His people of the favours He had bestowed on them. They had to celebrate every year with great solemnity the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Weeks, and other feasts, each of which was to commemorate some special mercy of God. But the Jewish dispensation, and all its ordinances, were only a preparation for what was to come, and "all these things happened to them in figure, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I. Cor. x. 11). The great events the Jews commemorated were themselves but passing figures of the Christian mysteries, and naturally the feasts kept in remembrance of them would be changed into memorials of Christian festivals.

Then, just as the Sabbath, the memorial of the world's creation, passed into the Christian Sunday, the memorial of the redemption of mankind, so did the commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt and God's other mercies to them pass into the feasts which celebrate the life and death of our Lord. The change was made on the same grounds and by the same authority, and therefore the obligation, in both cases, rests on the same foundation.

We are bound, then, to keep holy the Holydays of Obligation appointed by the Church with the same exactness with which we observe Sundays—that is, by hearing Mass and resting from servile work; but in practice there is a good deal of difference, in this country at least. The great bulk of people cannot, as a rule, observe Holydays very exactly; labourers and workmen and professional men must go on with their ordinary duties, and

cannot abstain from servile work, and there is a very large proportion who are not able even to hear Mass. The work of the world and of every-day life is going on around them, and they are obliged to take their part, and are generally excused, by necessity, from the observance of the Church's law. On Sundays it is different: the people, generally speaking, can observe the day if they will, and it is only in exceptional cases that there is a sufficient excuse for going on with ordinary occupations; whereas, on Holydays occurring during the week, it is rather the exception when men are able to observe the law strictly.

I have said so much, my dear brethren, in order that you may not be uneasy when your duty in life obliges you to neglect the ways of sanctifying Holydays of Obligation commanded by the Church; but I would speak very strongly on the importance of observing them in some way, and of doing something to sanctify them. There are, I am afraid, a great many people who could hear Mass on Holydays if they were really anxious to do so, but who too easily take for granted that they are excused. In some places there is a very early Mass, and numbers of working men assist at Mass before going to their work. Do you not think they must get a great blessing from God? They are willing to take a little extra trouble to pay honour to His festivals, and we cannot think He will leave them unrewarded. It is very important, at any rate, to observe these days in some way, and not to allow the great feasts of the Church to pass unnoticed, because you cannot do exactly what is commanded. How can you really be a follower of Christ if you have no devotion to the great and touching mysteries of His life?—how can you be a good member of the Catholic Church if you have no sympathy whatever with the feelings which animate her? The Church's Liturgy is one loving commemoration of her Divine Spouse, Jesus Christ, and, if we would at all enter into her spirit, we must at least try to have a devotion to the principal feasts as they come. You can always do something by way of sanctifying the day; if you cannot hear Mass, can you not go to Benediction in the evening?—or, if even that is beyond your power, can you not make some special commemoration of the feast on the Sunday following? Can you not, at least, say some extra prayers in honour of the feast, or perhaps, make it the occasion of an additional Communion? If you do none of these things, but allow such feasts as Christmas, or our Lord's Ascension, or Corpus Christi to pass without any sort of devotion, you must be very much out of sympathy with our Lord and His Church.

Our Lord complained of the want of sympathy shown by the

men of His generation, and many of us would fall under His condemnation. "And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like to children sitting in the market-place and speaking one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned, and you have not wept" (St. Luke vii. 31). It is most desirable, therefore, even independently of the expressed command of the Church, to arouse ourselves to special devotion on Holydays, and to do our best to enter into the spirit of each great festival as it comes.

The number of feasts observed as Holydays of Obligation varies in different places. In some countries many days are kept as Holydays which are working days in England, and, on the other hand, in some places a good many of the feasts which we observe are transferred to the Sundays following.

We have eight days of obligation, of which five are feasts of our Blessed Lord, one is of the Blessed Virgin, one of the Apostles, and one of all the saints together. The feasts of our Lord are, first, the three great festivals with which we celebrate His nativity—Christmas Day, the Circumcision, and the Epiphany. Christmas Day is the most touching festival in the year, on which each one of us is invited, as it were, to visit our Infant Saviour on the night of His birth. "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David." The Lord has condescended to come down to His people, and to pass over that infinite distance which divides Him from His creatures. He condescends to appeal to their tenderness and compassion by appearing before them in the guise of an helpless infant in the poor stable of Bethlehem. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the Fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the world" (Heb. i. 1). In this feast our Lord seems no longer to speak by the mouths of His ministers, but has a word to the heart of each individual. He would remind us by the very force of contrast of His eternity, that He was "born of the Father before all ages," and that He is now a new-born Infant before our eyes, that He may be born anew into the hearts of all men. In memory of this three-fold birth of Christ, the Church on that day celebrates three Masses—at midnight, at dawn, and at mid-day.

But it is not enough to celebrate the actual birth of our Lord. He came into the world to redeem us by His Precious Blood, and that redemption must be foreshadowed even from His birth. In the next feast—the Circumcision, the octave day of Christmas

—our Lord takes the name of Jesus, and does so on the occasion of the first shedding of His Blood. On this day our Lord seems to be born to suffering, born to take up the cross to be our Saviour; and, as it falls on the first day of the year, is a special dedication of the new year to the Holy Name, reminding us "that whatsoever we do in word or work, we must do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colos. iii. 17). And now comes the concluding festival of Christmas, the Epiphany, or, as it is sometimes called, the "Christmas Day of the Gentiles." On this day we celebrate the coming of the Wise Men from the East, who came to adore Him, and we are called upon to join with them in offering Him our solemn homage. The Wise Men opened their treasures, and "offered to Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh," thereby recognizing in Him the three-fold character of God, King, and Saviour, in which we are to accept Him. The "Epiphany" means the "manifestation" of our Lord, because His royal dignity was, on this day, made known to all men; and on the same feast the Church celebrates the three miracles by which specially he made His divinity known to men—the star which came from the East, the voice of the Holy Spirit at His Baptism in the Jordan, and His first miracle at Cana, in Galilee.

Besides these three Holydays, by which we celebrate our Lord's birth, there are the Ascension and Corpus Christi. These two are "movable feasts"—that is, they do not always fall on the same day of the month. They always come on the same day of the week—Thursday—but the date varies with that of Easter Sunday, on which movable feasts generally depend. Ascension Day is the glorious day of our Lord's triumphant ascension into heaven, when, "ascending on high, He led captivity captive: He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 8). This comes on the fortieth day after Easter Sunday. It is a day of glorious memories, pointing out to us the road we have to go, and the country which we are to reach. Our Lord seems to say to us, as we think of His Ascension: "Whither I go, you know, and the way you know" (St. John xiv. 4). "Corpus Christi" is the great feast of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist on Maundy Thursday; but on that day the Passion fills our thoughts so that we cannot honour as we should "the Body of the Lord;" and therefore the Church has appointed the Thursday after Trinity Sunday as a holiday in honour of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament. It is a grand feast; everywhere our Lord is borne in procession amongst His people, that He may carry with Him His blessings,

as He did through the fields of Palestine when "virtue went out from Him and healed all."

The one feast of our Lady which is observed as a Holyday is the Assumption, on the 15th of August. All the glories and privileges of her life seem concentrated in this one feast, when, as the Church says: "Mary is taken up into heaven, the angels rejoice and bless God." It is the day of our Lady's happy death, when she "entered into the joy of her Lord;" when she saw her Son face to face in His kingdom, never more to be separated from Him. The day of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, the 29th of June, is also a Holyday of Obligation. In these two great Apostles we commemorate the apostolic college, and the faith and means of grace which God bestowed by them on the whole world: "their sound went over all the earth, and their words even unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x. 18).

One more festival remains, and it is a most touching one—it is the Feast of "All Saints"—on the 1st of November. On it we celebrate the whole Church of Christ, and, in particular, that glorious army of saints which stand around His throne "clothed in white garments, with palm branches in their hands," who, in the torrent of their happiness, cry out, without ceasing: "Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb."

SERMON LXIV.

Keeping Sunday.

"And Jesus said to them, 'Come apart into a desert place, and rest awhile'" (St. Mark vi. 31).

MEN are bound, by the natural and divine law, to consecrate some part of their time to the service of God. All our lives, indeed, are given us that we may serve God, and, by doing so, obtain eternal happiness; and, in one sense, we are bound to give all our time to Him. This is the lesson our Lord teaches us in His first recorded words: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

These words convey to us that everything we do should make a part of the service which we owe to our Creator. Great things and small; our work, our rest, and our recreation should all be consecrated to God, so as to be "our Father's business." "All whatsoever you do, in word or work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, and the Father by Him" (Colos. iii. 17). The commonest actions of life, the daily duties you have to do in your families, the routine of your business, the amusements by which life's toil is lightened, are all so many works done for God's service, if only they are consecrated to Him by a good intention.

Men cannot, however, persevere in this kind of service unless they also set apart a sufficient proportion of their time for direct communication with Him. They owe Him a debt of worship and praise, and, at the same time, are in constant need of graces which can only be obtained by prayer. "Come ye to Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded" (Ps. xxxiii. 6). If we do not come into the presence of God as we ought to do the world soon becomes very dark to us, and the store of good-will and intention soon becomes exhausted, and the daily works of life soon cease to be in any sense the service of God.

The time which we consecrate directly to God is the salt with which all our lives are seasoned; but "if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" (St. Matt. v. 13). Those, therefore, who are remiss in prayer, and neglect to give a fair share of their time to God's service, soon lose the savour of goodness

which ought to make even their most trifling actions acceptable to God.

It is, then, the law of God, and the law of our nature, that we should consecrate a portion of our time to Him, and this is laid down to us in the Third Commandment, which says: "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day." In the New Law, however, the times and seasons which we are to dedicate to Him have been left to the ordering of His Church. This is clear, as I before showed, from the fact that all the days which God commanded the Jews to keep holy have been abrogated in the Christian Church, and new days have been substituted in their place. Not only have the festivals which belonged in a particular manner to the Jewish dispensation been changed, but even the ancient Sabbath Day, which was from the beginning, has been put aside. The Church in apostolic times appointed a new day, and allowed the Sabbath Day, by degrees, to fall into disuse, so that the Lord's Day, the Christian Sunday, is in no sense the same festival which the Jews observed. It is appointed, indeed, with the same general object—that is, to give to God's service a proper proportion of our time; but the memories, the spirit, and the rules of its observance are essentially different.

As the Church appoints the days we are to offer to God, so it tells us how we are to consecrate them to Him; and, to observe them properly, we must attend to the laws, and to the spirit of the Catholic Church. There is scarcely any duty of a Christian life which is of greater importance than the due observance of Sunday. Those who are engaged in the ordinary pursuits of men cannot generally give much of their time to prayer during the week, and therefore if they do not sanctify Sunday they very soon fall away. The spirit of prayer is dried up within them, and they become cold and indifferent in the service of God. Those, on the other hand, who are devout in the observance of Sunday are perpetually renewing their fervour.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 23). How can we be "renewed in the spirit of our minds" if we do not frequently come near to our Lord by giving a reasonable time to His service? A household, then, in which the Sunday is well observed, where the parents take pains to teach their children, by word and example, to keep Sunday holy, and make it a day of piety and devotion, is sure to have the blessing of God; the parents have, at any rate, given to their children for their after life a most efficacious remedy against the dangers and temptations of the world. On the other hand, when fathers and mothers neglect to instil into their children's minds

this reverence and devotion for the Lord's Day, the time of temptation comes, and the children are deprived of the arms with which to fight against it.

With regard to the observance of Sunday, Catholics in this country are placed in a difficult position. We are surrounded by good and well-meaning people, who would turn the Christian Sunday into a Jewish Sabbath. They would, as far as possible, apply to the observance of Sunday all the severe laws which were laid down for the Jews in the Old Law. They follow, indeed, the Christian Church by observing the first day of the week instead of the seventh, which God commanded the Jews to observe so strictly, but they would transfer to it the usages and spirit with which the Jewish Sabbath was observed. Such people would keep Sunday with an austerity which resembles that of the Pharisees; they would forbid any kind of recreation and enjoyment, so as to make it a day of gloom and restraint, instead of a refreshment to soul and body.

Our Lord tells us that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" and any degree of severity which prevents the Sunday from being a day of real rest is inconsistent with the object for which it was instituted, and, moreover, gives rise to a very dangerous reaction.

It is impossible, however, not to have some sympathy with those whose mistake consists in wanting to give a great deal to the service of God, and who are very self-denying and consistent in carrying out what appears to them to be His law.

On the other hand, there is around us a great deal of laxity in the observance of Sunday, and this is a much more dangerous error. Great numbers of people are to be found who look on the Sunday simply as a day of amusement and idleness, and would give little or nothing to Almighty God. This is very dangerous, because our own natural inclinations dispose us to fall in very easily with such a view of our duties.

Between these opposite errors Catholics have to guide their course, and they can only do so by attending to the commands and to the spirit of the Church. We must endeavour, in the first place, not to give scandal. It is well, as far as possible, to avoid anything which may unnecessarily shock religious people, and make them fancy that we are careless in observing Sunday. Their prejudices sometimes seem to us unfounded and unreasonable, but still charity suggests that we should rather deny ourselves than do anything to alienate them from the Church. St. Paul says: "Take heed lest, perhaps, this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak . . . . through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?" (I. Cor.

viii. 9). Catholics sometimes forget this principle of charity, and think it a fine thing to give this kind of scandal—and particularly in the way in which they observe Sunday.

We cannot, however, in the least agree to the principle on which this strictness is founded, and it is quite contrary to the spirit of the Catholic Church. Let us see what our Lord Himself tells us in the Gospel. He begins by rebuking the over-strictness of the Pharisees; this He does over and over again, and to do it He even allowed Himself to be called a Sabbath-breaker. He worked a number of miracles expressly to raise the question: "And the ruler of the synagogue, being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath Day, answering, said to the multitude: Six days are there wherein you ought to work. In them come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath Day. And the Lord, answering him, said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you, on the Sabbath Day, loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?" (St. Luke xiii. 14).

Again, in another instance, the Jews said to him that was healed: It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed. He answered them: He that made me whole, He said to me: Take up thy bed and walk" (St. John v. 10). Our Lord here did not scruple to tell the man to take up his bed and walk, although He knew that by doing so He would offend against the notions of the Pharisees. Again, when they "went through the corn on the Sabbath His Disciples, being hungry, began to pluck the ears and to eat. And the Pharisees, seeing them, said to Him, Behold, Thy Disciples do that which it is not lawful to do on the Sabbath Days" (St. Matt. xii. 1). But our Lord defended their conduct, and it is remarkable that in every instance in which He spoke of the observance of the Sabbath Day it was to condemn the exaggerated notions of the Jews.

Our Lord lays down two principles on which a reasonable observance of Sunday must be based: "And He said to them: The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; therefore, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath also" (St. Mark ii. 27). "Made for man"—for all his reasonable wants of body and soul; and, therefore, any strictness which does not take these necessities into consideration is contrary to our Lord's spirit: "Made for man," not for a few staid and devout people, but of the bulk of men—of hard-working labourers and restless children; for people who require bodily rest and

relaxation, and very often need exercise and amusement quite as much. Our Lord's spirit would allow a reasonable scope for all these things.

But He says also: "The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath." It is His day, even when He allows us to use a part of it for our own purposes. From the beginning the Sunday has been called "Dies Dominica," or the Lord's Day; this is the Church's name for it, and the name still lingers in most modern languages. It is His day; and we are to observe it, not according to any fancies of our own, but as we are directed to do by the Church, which speaks in His name, and which alone has authority in such matters.

The first Commandment of the Church is, "to keep the Sundays and Holydays of Obligation holy by hearing Mass, and resting from servile works." We will begin with the obligation of resting from work on Sundays. This is the essential condition of the day; if you do not rest, and give up the ordinary toil of your life, the day becomes like all other days, and it is vain that you pretend to make it the Lord's day. It is true that we may do servile work when it is *necessary;* but this plea of necessity is very often much abused. There are few things about which people make false consciences for themselves more easily, and we constantly see work done—and this even by good people—which is not really necessary.

It is not *necessary* to work on Sundays, merely because you can gain a little extra profit, or avoid a little trouble, or because you have not moral courage to refuse to do anything that you are asked. Sometimes, no doubt, a man's living depends on his being able to do certain work on Sundays, or he may be under very hard masters and in distress, so that he cannot help himself; but, generally speaking, people can have a good deal of their own way, and can stand up very well for their rights and for what they want. If, then, they do not take the least trouble to keep Sunday free for the service of God we cannot but suppose that in many cases it is not necessity, but indolence or indifference.

Again, it is not necessary for people to give large dinner-parties, and receive visits, so as to make their servants work all Sunday. A great many rich people are very heedless in such things, and do not seem to trouble their consciences at all about the matter; everything that suits their convenience is a *necessity.* The Catechism says: "Parents, masters, and mistresses are strictly bound to provide that those under their charge shall hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation;" and, in the same way, they are bound to give those under their

control the opportunity of resting from all work not *really* necessary.

When Catholics are lax and negligent in this matter, they do incalculable harm, and are often a standing scandal; they are a scandal, by leading others to neglect the observance of the Lord's Day, and, perhaps, to go much farther than they themselves do; and they are a scandal, by giving occasion to the enemies of the Catholic Church to speak against her. In the great battle which is going on in these days between religion and irreligion at least let us not be found on the enemy's side, strengthening his hands by our example.

The duty of Sunday, however, is not done simply by resting from work; we have, unfortunately, around us the example of too many who rest from work, but are as far as possible from making it the Lord's Day. They make it the devil's day—a day of idleness and dissipation; on which, perhaps, they commit more sins than on any other. It is, moreover, quite possible to observe the letter of the Church's commands, and yet quite to violate the spirit of them. Let us see, then, what is the intention and meaning of this rest.

The Sunday ought to be, above all things, a day of recollection; the very object of its institution is to give us the opportunity to recollect ourselves, or, to use the expression of the Holy Scripture, to "enter into ourselves." Our Lord calls upon us all, in the words of my text, to "come apart into a desert place, and rest awhile"—that is, He tells all the busy, hard-working men of this world to leave their ordinary toil, however useful and important it may be, and take the rest needful for soul and body. He would have them leave their shops and counting-houses, and the care of their domestic concerns, to come and sit down for a little while in His company, that they may confer with Him about something more important than business, or family, or life itself.

He knows how difficult it is for any one, in the full tide of ordinary affairs, to think of his soul, and that, if he would know anything of his own state, it is absolutely necessary to retire a little from the crowd and "enter into himself." This is the beginning of every conversion. The prodigal son went on in his wanderings, till he met with afflictions that compelled him to look at his own state, and, as soon as that was done, his return was comparatively easy; so it is that the weekly recollection of Sunday does so much, both for the perseverance of the good and the conversion of sinners.

You cannot, then, observe Sunday, according to the spirit of the Church, without giving some time to recollection of spirit—

without going apart, for awhile, with our Lord to listen to what He has to say to you; and every arrangement of Sunday which does not include this is a faulty one. You ought not habitually to allow yourself either occupations or amusements which are inconsistent with the necessary degree of recollection; nay, even frequent visits to the church should not be allowed to interfere with this interior spirit. You find people sometimes who are very fond of attending many public devotions, and visiting many churches, and yet contrive to be very seldom alone with God.

Our Lord says: "When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (St. Matt. vi. 6). These words refer very often to that mental recollection which is the very essence of prayer. We may shut the doors of our hearts, and be alone with God, and pray to Him in secret, in the midst of a crowd, as truly as we could in the desert; but still the words seem to point to the advantage of some kind of home devotion, where people literally shut their doors and pray in secret, or, at any rate, do something in the way of retirement and recollection.

This, then, ought to be the spirit of the Christian Sunday. It is our Lord's Day—a day for seeking Him in church and in His sacraments—a day for listening to His words both externally and in our own hearts—a day especially when we seek His company by interior recollection, and desire to go apart with Him, and "rest awhile" from the ordinary concerns of life. This is the idea of Sunday which you should impress on your households; not merely that there are certain duties of absolute obligation which, before all things, they must be careful to attend to, but that they are to observe the spirit of the day honestly and generously, so as to make it truly the Lord's Day.

In saying this, I do not mean to find fault with innocent amusements; recreations, followed in a right spirit, may be made the service of God, and "the Sabbath is made for man." Our Lord sympathizes with all our feelings. He "knows what is in man," and He does not grudge us a reasonable portion of the time He has taken for Himself—nay, if young people occasionally take an *un*reasonable part of it, and, now and then, spend a large part of the day in taking fresh air and exercise, which they cannot otherwise get, I do not think He will be offended—if they are careful in hearing Mass—provided that, as a rule and habitually, they keep Sunday in a right spirit, and give their time and service generously to Him.

And now let us consider how we are to practise this recollec-

tion of mind, of which I have been speaking. Meditation, or mental prayer, is the most efficacious of all the ways by which we can enter into ourselves. It was the favourite devotion of the saints, by which they were kept constantly full and overflowing with the fervour that appeared in every word and action. It was, in particular, the special devotion of St. Ignatius, and his principal instrument in the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of souls. No habits of sin, no coldness of heart, can long resist good meditations. "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out" (Ps. xxxviii. 4). This flame, of which the Psalmist speaks, is powerful enough to consume all the obstacles that come between us and our sanctification.

To meditate you require three things—to dwell upon the presence of God; to be for a sufficient time alone with Him in heart; and to speak to Him in your own words; all the rest comes of itself. Our danger and trial is that we are so near to God, and yet so far off from Him. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," and yet He may often say of us as of the Jews: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." It will always be so, unless we take some special pains to think of God's presence, and to present ourselves in spirit before Him. Our Lord is near to us, and yet we do not see Him, and cannot hear His voice, because the glare and the tumult of this world come between us and Him; and it is the work of meditation to put these aside for a moment, that we may be face to face with our Creator, and obtain from Him the graces we most need.

One of the best practices for reminding us of the presence of God is spiritual reading, and this is a subject to which I would call your special attention at the conclusion of this sermon. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of pious reading, and the lives of the saints are full of its effects. You have often heard, I dare say, of the wonderful conversion of St. Ignatius—that he became a saint by reading the lives of the saints. When confined to bed by his wounds, he took to these histories. He read them, at first, only to pass the time, but afterwards began to relish them, and to pass whole days in reading them; and so began his saintly life.

Spiritual reading is important, because it is the easiest way of coming into God's presence by recollection. Many people find it hard to make a regular meditation—their thoughts wander, and they grow weary; but no one can really say that is difficult to spend a short time in reading a book, and following the thoughts it suggests. You have no method to learn, and require no practice: you are not obliged to leave your home or your own

room ; and yet you have a powerful means of raising your heart to God, or, we may say, God speaks to you through the pages of your book.

Some such exercise is necessary for a Christian life. If you have not something to keep up the store of good thoughts and feelings within you, you cannot expect to persevere in prayer. You hear people complaining of dryness and indevotion : they cannot pray, their minds suggest no good thoughts, they have nothing to say, and they cannot keep their attention. Is this wonderful if they do nothing to replenish the store of good within them ? At the present day a certain amount of religious reading is particularly necessary. People read a great deal at the present day, but the greater part of the literature which surrounds us leads to dissipation of mind, and it is sometimes very dangerous. Besides this, we are surrounded by active and zealous Protestants, who spare no pains in putting forward their own particular views: they are, of course, quite ignorant of the Catholic faith, and proportionately bitter against it. All this, day after day, cannot fail to have an effect, as the dropping of water on a stone, unless we do something systematically to counteract it ; and there is nothing better fitted for the purpose than regular religious reading.

Such reading, then, ought to have a distinct place in the Sunday duty of every Catholic household ; it should be impressed on all young people that some devout reading must form a part of every well-spent Sunday. Many seem to think, at the present day that when they have heard Mass they have nothing more to do, but that they may read novels and amuse themselves all day long.

This is clearly defective training; it is not, perhaps, that they want to do wrong, but they have been brought up with a lax idea of their duty, and they do not rightly understand what is meant by giving a good day's service to Almighty God.

Years ago, at the beginning of the present century, the Catholics in England seem to have had a much greater zeal for religious reading, and we owe to them many of the most valuable books now in use; but the practice of pious reading seems rather to have gone out of fashion, and it ought to be the earnest wish of all good Catholics to revive it.

The reading ought to be of two kinds—instructive and devotional. We hardly realize how much most people need instruction ; but many, perhaps, learned their faith in childhood, and have studied it very little since, so it is not wonderful that their knowledge should sometimes be im-

perfect. It is one of the objects of Sunday to keep up an accurate knowledge of the faith, and there is no way in which it can be done more effectually than by spiritual reading. It is not too much to say that any one who gave half an hour every Sunday to some course of instruction, as well as devotion, could not fail to know his duty.

The books to be read are the Holy Scriptures, the lives of the saints, sermons, instructions and meditations. We want to read a great deal about the life of our Lord in the New Testament, as well as such books as the "Imitation of Christ" and others, that put His doctrine and example before us. It must, however, be confessed that, at present, we have not in England a very good supply of religious books, or, at any rate, of books suitable to the poor, and accessible to them, and this may be one of the reasons why there is so little spiritual reading. The Sermons which I am now writing are an attempt to supply this deficiency. Sermons and instructions in Christian duties form one very important kind of spiritual reading, but many other kinds of reading are necessary, and it should be one of the great objects of Catholic zeal to supply them.

I think I cannot do better than conclude this volume of Sermons by exhorting all my readers to help, to the best of their power, in the work of supplying and circulating Catholic religious reading, for the spiritual benefit of their brethren, and especially to help them in sanctifying the Lord's Day.

SERMON LXV.

Divine Grace.

"By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace in me hath not been void" (I. Cor. xv. 10).

In these few words of St. Paul, my dear brethren, we have before us the whole Catholic doctrine about Divine Grace. They explain to us the absolute necessity of grace. "I am what am"—all the merit and excellence which the Apostle possessed before God, came—not from his own work—not from his labours and sufferings—but from God's grace and favour; but, again, man's co-operation is necessary likewise, because God does not work in us except by our own consent. "His grace in me hath not been void." I have not made void the grace of God by refusing to work with it; the grace of God, therefore, however abundant, is not sufficient by itself, but requires a corresponding effort on the part of him who receives it, otherwise it will produce no effect.

I propose to speak of the sacraments, which are channels of God's grace; and before I commence that subject it is necessary to explain, as carefully as I can, what grace is, how we are to obtain it, and how to correspond with what we receive.

What is Divine Grace? It is the great spiritual bond by which men are united to God in the supernatural order, and are dependent upon Him, by which He holds the reins, if we may say so, and rules perpetually over the hearts of His creatures.

In the order of nature, not only every living being, but every inanimate object, is encompassed by God, and moves by His power; there are a thousand different subordinate forces, but it is His power which acts in them all, in a multitude of different channels, under different names, and according to different laws; but still it is His power. "The Father worketh until now, and I work." If for one moment the power of the Creator ceased to sustain the works of His hands, all creatures would perish. "But if Thou turn away Thy face, they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust" (Ps. ciii. 29).

So it is in the supernatural order; the energy by which the soul acts, the first impulse and the sustaining power, and the ultimate completion must come from God, and without Him

nothing can be done. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. ii. 13). Yet more; God acts in His material creation, and does everything by His own power, and yet leaves His creatures free to follow the laws of their own being, so as to guide them without doing violence to the nature which He has given to them; so in the spiritual kingdom He influences the hearts of men without interfering with their free will. He moves, assists, and sustains them by His grace, and makes it the instrument by which the moral world is guided; but He does not compel. His work is done in, and through, His creatures, and is always dependent upon them for co-operation.

The word grace means favour, and, therefore, always implies something which is not a *right*, but a *gift*, and by it we generally mean supernatural favours, or something connected with the next world. Some supernatural graces are in the miraculous order, such as were the gift of tongues bestowed upon the Apostles, but grace, in its ordinary signification, means the interior and spiritual gifts bestowed upon men to make them pleasing in the sight of God.

The first thing we have to remember is the absolute necessity of grace. No words can express this so strongly as those of our Lord, when He says: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you the branches: he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth" (St. John xv. 4). Nothing can more forcibly express the utter powerlessness of man to work for his salvation by his own unassisted efforts than this comparison. He is unable to make a beginning—he cannot move on one step; and, especially, he cannot persevere to the end without the assistance of Divine Grace: as St. Paul tells us, "No man can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (I. Cor. xii. 3); and, "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (II. Cor. iii. 5). "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi. 1). It is vain for us to imagine that we can build up any structure of goodness and holiness unless God's grace builds it up for us, and it is to no purpose that we watch to preserve ourselves from evil, unless the grace of God keeps us from it.

God's grace, however, is always given to us when we need it

"Of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (St. John i. 16). No one can ever say that he fell into sin because grace was wanting to him, and power was not given to him to resist temptation. Our Lord is the "true light that enlighteneth every man who cometh into this world," and he either actually gives to each one the grace necessary for him under the circumstances in which he is placed, or gives him the means of obtaining it if he chooses. "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in infirmity" (II. Cor. xii. 9). This was the answer which our Lord made to St. Paul, when he was wearied by a grievous temptation, and it is the answer He gives to all of us. However great may be the difficulties which you have to encounter—however sharp the temptation—the grace of God is sufficient for you. It does not matter whether the temptation arises from external circumstances or from old habits, or the immediate suggestions of the devil—the grace which you receive will enable you to overcome it, if only you do your part.

We have abundant illustrations of this in the lives of the saints, as well as in common life. How great must have been the graces given to the martyrs to enable them to win their crowns! It would have been impossible for any one of that great crowd of martyrs, who "came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb," to have persevered without a strong sustaining grace from Almighty God. As the need increased, and the difficulties grew more overwhelming, so did the supernatural help afforded to the saints increase with it—and, in the end, grace was victorious.

St. Paul says: "Let no temptation take hold on you but such as is human, and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13). In whatever circumstances we are placed we have a right, therefore, to reckon with confidence on the grace of God to enable us to be victorious over temptation, if only we are prepared to correspond with the grace He gives us—"being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6).

God gives His grace to all men, and this grace is able to produce the greatest results, but it will not act by itself. It is absolutely necessary that we should correspond with the grace given to us, and not make it "void" by our want of good will—"His grace in me hath not been void." St. Paul had received

the most powerful, the most special graces that could be given to any man: his calling was a miracle of God's grace, and yet he clearly shows us that all this *might* have been void, and produced no effect, if he had refused his co-operation. He, therefore, says to the Christian converts at Corinth: "And we, helping, do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain" (II. Cor. vi. 1).

You have, no doubt, my dear brethren, often heard the well-known words, "God made you without your consent, and redeemed you without your consent; but He will not save you without your consent." Whatever graces God may give you He will certainly not *compel* you to be good; and, therefore, the greatest and most important work of man is to co-operate zealously with the grace which God gives.

I have now to dwell on the great division of grace, without knowing which you cannot possibly understand the subject. It is clear that the word "grace" is constantly used in two quite different senses—that is, to express two things which are perfectly distinct. These two things are "actual grace" and "habitual grace;" they are closely connected, because actual grace is intended to lead us to habitual grace, or to maintain us in it; but, in themselves, they are entirely different.

Actual grace is the help of God; it is that interior impulse to do good and to avoid evil, without which there can be no spiritual act of any supernatural reward. This interior impulse is to our souls what the sap is to the branch of the vine; if the sap and vital force are not supplied to it, the branch cannot bring forth fruit; and so, if the spiritual and supernatural impulse be not communicated by God, there can be no spiritual fruit, since "the branch cannot bear fruit of itself."

This "helping" grace it is of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "I can do all things in Him who strengthened me" (Phil. iv. 13); and, again, when he tells us to "be strengthened in the Lord and the might of His power. Put you on the armour of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil; for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. vi. 10). It is called "actual" grace, because it is a mere *passing* grace—a help which God bestows on us to enable us to perform that *act* of the will by which we do the good or avoid the evil which is presented to us. The fruits produced by the help of actual grace remain: "I have chosen you . . . . that you should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain" (St. John xv. 16); but the impulse of grace

which produced it passes away with the act that is completed. It is also called preventing grace—that is, a grace *going before*—because it is the divine impulse from which all good actions take their rise, for "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good-will" (Phil. ii. 13).

We may again distinguish actual graces into several kinds; besides the general assistance given to all, there are the graces given to different states of life, or special inspirations and assistances granted according to the wants of those called to them; and there is besides a sacramental grace, or a special assistance given by Almighty God to carry out the end for which the sacraments were instituted. Actual grace is given by Almighty God to all men; to some, indeed, it is bestowed more efficaciously than on others, but it is given in a sufficient measure to all; it is the means by which creatures are drawn to their Creator, and God gives what is necessary to every one of them, "dividing to each one according to His will."

The grace which He gives has within it, moreover, a power of increase and expansion—like the fire which spreads rapidly through the reeds. A little fire, if it takes hold, soon becomes a mighty blaze; and a little grace given by God, if properly corresponded with, soon brings greater graces. Every illumination which God gives to us contains in itself the beginning of a brighter and clearer light, and it is our own fault if the graces which we receive do not lead us on to something higher.

We cannot illustrate this better than by the history of the star which called the Wise Men out of the East and led them to Bethlehem; indeed, it would almost seem as if this star had been intended to explain the ordinary course of God's call to man. The star appeared to the Wise Men of the East, and they followed it, not knowing, and perhaps not considering, whither it was to lead them; all that they knew and saw at the moment was the duty of following. They followed it therefore, in spite of all the difficulties of their path—over mountains and rivers, through strange countries and into distant lands, and it led them first to Jerusalem and then to our Lord—and, "seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And, entering in, they found the Child with Mary, His Mother" (St. Matt. ii. 10). The duty of all mankind is to imitate the example of these Wise Men, and follow the light of God's grace as it is given to them. It may be faint and obscure at starting, but as we follow it becomes clearer and brighter, and certainly will never abandon us until it brings us to the vision of God: "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth: they have conducted me and brought me unto the holy hill and into Thy tabernacles" (Ps. xlii. 3).

People sometimes complain of a want of light, and say that God's grace has been sparingly bestowed on them; but the reason of this is generally plain enough; it is that they have taken little or no trouble to correspond with the graces actually given, and, as they have received them in vain, God has given them no more. The Holy Scripture says: "A good understanding to all that do it" (Ps. cx. 10); and if you take little pains to *do*, you cannot complain if God gives you but little light to understand.

The effects of Divine Grace upon those who receive it worthily are wonderful and magnificent. "God is wonderful in His saints." "I can do *all* things in Him that strengtheneth me," says the Apostle; and there are no difficulties, exterior or interior, which grace cannot overcome; there are no heights of sanctity which it will not achieve. The saints were mortal men like ourselves, and yet God raised them so high, and made them stand before Him for ever in His glory, to show us what His grace could accomplish. The grace of God is the seed which is sown in our hearts, which, falling upon good ground, will spring up and "produce fruit a hundredfold,"—not the mere pretence of fruit, but fruit really excellent in the sight of God, because it is the true "fruit of the vine" produced by the branches that "abide in the vine." Grace is the "Word of God, living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit of the joints also, and of the marrow" (Heb. iv. 12); it is the word of God, spoken not to the outward ear, but to the inward soul, and able to produce in that soul wonders of courage and patience, wonders of zeal and piety, and every virtue of which the human soul is capable.

God will, some day, ask us to give an account of all the things He has given us in this life: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou cans't be steward no longer." We shall then have to show what use we have made of all the talents entrusted to us, and, most of all, shall we be called upon to account for the many graces which we have received. Happy will it be for us if we are able to say with St. Paul: "His grace in me hath not been void."

I now come to speak of the other kind of grace to which actual grace leads us when we correspond with it. This grace is "habitual or sanctifying" grace, and is, indeed, "the charity of God poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). Habitual grace brings with it the "favour and friendship of God;" if you have it, you thereby become the friend and child of God; if you have it not, you are His enemy. Our Lord says: "If any man love Me, he will keep My word,

and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him" (St. John xiv. 23). It is by habitual grace that God dwells in our hearts and abides with us, not for a few moments, but permanently, unless we shut the door of our hearts against Him.

It is called "habitual" grace because it is a *habit* or permanent quality in the soul. We cannot better illustrate the qualities of habitual grace than by comparing it to the wedding garment in which all the guests in our Lord's parable were expected to be clad. A king invited a multitude to his banquet, "the poor and the feeble, the blind and the lame;" but each one who took his place at that table must be clothed in the "wedding garment," by which alone he could be rendered worthy of that royal presence. Oh, how beautiful must that garment of Divine Grace be, which can make the poor, miserable, and sinful children of men fit members of that kingdom in which God reigns with His saints! How precious must the raiment be which can cover over all the stains and miseries of human wretchedness, and make men worthy of the love of their infinite Creator! Nothing can do this but the garment of Divine Grace, which shines with the Precious Blood of Christ.

The grace of God is not, however, a mere garment; it does not merely cover over the wickedness and filth of sin, so as to make that which is foul within appear beautiful to the eye; it does not leave the soul to be a "whited sepulchre;" but the touch of this garment carries with it a complete and perfect soundness. It does not merely *call* sinners just, but it makes them "holy and unspotted in His sight in charity" (Eph. i. 4).

We may, also, compare habitual grace to a light. "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like men who wait for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding" (St. Luke xii. 35). What, my dear brethren, is the lamp which each one of you must hold in his hand when his Lord shall come? Is it not the lamp of that divine charity by which alone you can be acceptable to Him? Our Lord tells us Himself that the kingdom of heaven is "like to ten virgins who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride, and five of them were foolish and five wise . . . . and at midnight there was a cry made: Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps" (St. Matt. xxv. 1). When we "go forth" to meet the bridegroom we must carry with us that divine light with which our Lord has enlightened our souls, and present it to Him, who was Himself "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (St. John i. 9).

I have said that actual grace is a passing grace, which helps us in our work, and then leaves us; but habitual grace is a permanent and lasting gift, as we may learn from the comparisons that have been used. It is a garment which clothes us when once we have put it on, until we remove it, and a light which burns till we extinguish it by our own fault. It is a grace which we could never deserve for ourselves, but is freely given to us by our Lord when we are baptized, since we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24); and no one can take it away from us. Day and night, sleeping and waking, at all times and in all places, we remain clothed with this wedding garment, till by our own deliberate we cast it off. Even then our Lord is always willing to restore it to us, if we will turn back to Him; and He is not only ready to restore to us once more the "first robe," but He is continually urging us on to come to Him to receive it.

Let us now consider the marvellous effects of habitual grace upon our souls. It is called sanctifying grace, because it necessarily makes all those who possess it holy and pleasing to God; the greatest sinner, no matter what his crimes may have been, is at once purified from all mortal sin, and made the child of God, if only this supernatural gift, this "charity of God," enters into his soul—"if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be as red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Is. i. 18). The sanctifying grace of God is incompatible with mortal sin; and one mortal sin must necessarily drive away God's grace; and, in the same way, the grace of God entering the soul must at once purify it from all mortal sin.

The grace which cleanses us from sin, and makes us holy and pleasing to God, makes us also the heirs of heaven. Grace is God's free gift, but with it He bestows a *right* to an eternal reward; so that, from the moment we are baptized, if only we can "keep our baptism so as to be without blame," and carry the white garment "without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ," we have a claim upon that eternal inheritance. With the sanctifying grace given to us in Baptism we have "received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also—heirs, indeed, of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 15). If we are sons of God by the gift of Divine Grace, we have also necessarily the right to reign with Him in His kingdom—therefore was it that St. Paul says: "There is laid for me a crown,

which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day" (II. Tim. iv. 8). He has told us before that all that he had was by the grace of God, something freely bestowed upon him by God's bounty; but the crown of justice which corresponds to the graces he has received he claims as a right.

And now, my dear brethren, can we ever think enough of God's grace? Can we ever value it as we ought? Without it we are simply powerless, since "all our sufficiency is from God;" but with it we can do everything. Can any diligence or care be too much to secure for ourselves this all-powerful help? And, especially, who can sufficiently esteem the royal gift of God's friendship and the treasures and privileges which it carries with it? Sanctifying grace is, indeed, the greatest of all treasures—it is the pearl of great price which the merchant in the Gospel purchased at the cost of all that he had. We might well use of this divine charity, which is the cause and instrument of our sanctification, the words of Holy Scripture: "I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stones, for all gold, in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver, in respect to her, shall be counted as clay. I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light, for her light cannot be put out. Now, all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands" (Wis. vii. 8).

If Christians only knew how much was meant by sanctifying grace, and how great were the treasures and privileges that were included in it, they would see that even these inspired words fell short of the truth.

Our Lord Himself tells us that He will "come like a thief in the night," and if we are not found in a state of grace when He comes, there is no further hope for us. Only one question was asked: "How came you in here, not having on the wedding garment?" There was no room for explanation and excuse before the sentence came.

We must not be contented with merely watching over this treasure, and taking care that it is never snatched from our hands; we must use all diligence to increase it. Every day we may, if we will, add something to the treasure of Divine Grace; we may become more holy, and obtain a higher place in God's favour. Every step which we make in grace in this life means an advance of glory and blessedness in the life to come; it means that we shall see God more clearly, and enjoy Him more intensely for all eternity. Our object in this life, therefore, is not to be contented with the grace which we have,

but to press on to obtain more, "forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth ourselves to those that are before" (Phil. iii. 13).

Our Lord says, "Every branch that beareth fruit He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (St. John xv. 2); and the object of all the graces given us is to enable us to bring forth more fruit, to give us a more abundant treasure of sanctifying grace.

It is for this end that everything in religion is designed, and for this especially that the sacraments were instituted. If, then, my dear brethren, you would learn the value of the sacraments which our Lord has appointed, you must first ask Him to teach you properly to esteem the great treasure of sanctifying grace which He has bestowed on you.

SERMON LXVI.

The Sacraments.

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isaias xii. 3)

WE cannot make one step towards our eternal salvation without the assistance of divine grace. It is God, my dear brethren, who gives the power to make a beginning, and then strength to persevere. It is He who goes before our efforts by the inspirations of His grace, and then supplies the means by which His grace may be increased, and, finally, He completes His own good work in us by the gift of final perseverance, so that everything is due to Him. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will" (Phil. ii. 13). It is plain, therefore, that our first duty is to look out for the means of grace which God has appointed, and to make diligent use of them. If men do not take the trouble to look for the help which God is ready to give them, it is clear that they cannot complain if they are left to themselves. It will be no excuse for us to say that we were too weak to do anything, if we are able to get the strength we require by using the proper means. We shall, therefore, be held responsible not only for the graces which we have received, but also for those which we *might* have had by using ordinary diligence.

Almighty God has left us thus dependent upon His grace, that we may be obliged constantly to look up to Him as our Father, from whom all good comes. "Every best and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17).

Our Lord tells us to pray every day for our daily bread. "Give us this day our daily bread"—and by this He means not only the food to support our bodily life, but also the grace of God, which is necessary for the spiritual life of our souls.

There are two direct ways in which we may get the grace of God, and, besides these, there is that indirect, but most efficacious, way of obtaining it, which consists in thankfulness for God's gifts, and diligent correspondence with the graces already received. To-day I shall speak of the direct means of grace, which are prayer and the Sacraments. These are both necessary; they are intended to work together, and supplement each other, and,

as a rule, they cannot produce their proper effect except in union. There are, indeed, exceptional cases in which God will supply all that is needed to prayer alone; for example, when the Sacraments cannot be had, and, in the same way, there are occasions in which the Sacraments will confer grace on those who are unable to pray, as in the case of infants who are baptized, and, sometimes, of sick people who receive Extreme Unction.

These, however, are exceptions, and, as a rule, in an ordinary Christian life prayer and the Sacraments must go together. If you were diligent in approaching the Sacraments, but prayed very little, you would receive very scanty graces from God, and would run great risk of receiving the Sacraments unworthily. On the other hand, if you said many prayers, but, at the same time, were negligent and cold in receiving the Sacraments—if you went very seldom to Confession and Communion, for instance, when you might go frequently if you liked—you would not get much answer to your prayers.

It is very common to hear people say that they do not get any great graces from the Sacraments—that their confessions and communions produce very little fruit, and that they do not appear to be much better for them. You will generally find that the reason of all this is, that they say so few prayers. Perhaps it will be found that they make a very hurried preparation for their confession, or that they give very few minutes to devotion before and after Communion—perhaps, indeed, hardly make any thanksgiving at all. In such cases they have not disposed themselves by prayer to receive much grace. Again, there are many people who pray very little in the ordinary course of daily life, and so do not allow themselves any opportunity of making *use* of the graces they have received.

Prayer and the sacraments are both the means of grace, but they are widely different in their nature; indeed, they are, in most respects, a contrast. Prayer is the inward channel of God's grace, whereas the sacraments are essentially external. It may seem strange to speak of prayer as something quite interior, when there are so many external things connected with it. There are, indeed, abundant outward forms of prayer, and helps to prayer —books, rosaries, pictures—and people join together to pray in common; but prayer itself is quite interior—it is "the raising up of the mind and heart to God."

All the outward objects are only useful in order to help us to lift up our hearts. They are like the scaffolding. When you mean to build a house, you put up scaffold-poles to help you to raise the walls, but the only use of these poles is that the wall inside them may be built. In the same way, books and pictures

are meant to help you to lift up your mind and heart above this earth, and fix them upon God; and, if you do not do this, all the outward forms are useless.

If you saw a builder taking a great deal of trouble about his scaffolding, and building it up with great care and expense, and then paying very little attention to the building it was put up for—getting on very slowly with his walls and doing them very carelessly—you would say that he was acting in a very foolish manner, and did not know what he was about. This, however, is just what a good many people do about their prayers: they take a great deal of trouble about reciting forms of words, and using external assistances, but give very little thought to putting themselves into the presence of God, and raising up their minds to Him, and giving Him their hearts; whereas, the use of the external things is simply to help us to raise up our hearts; and without our hearts they are nothing. Do not those who act in this way deserve the reproach, "This people honoureth with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (St. Matt. xv. 8).

On the other hand, external aids to devotion are very important, and there are few of us who can do without them. It is only the saints and very spiritual people who can, at all times, raise their minds to God without help, and therefore we should diligently use the best forms of prayer, and especially those to which the Church has attached indulgences, and avail ourselves of all the external aids to recollection that we can get—remembering always, however, that their use is as instruments to raise our hearts to God.

"The Spirit breatheth where He will: and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh, and whither He goeth" (St. John iii. 8). It is a great comfort to know that God's grace is working throughout the whole of His creation, even amongst those out of the visible communion of His Church; we rejoice to think that He hears and answers all the prayers made to Him with a good heart, and despises none of the works of His hands. May He complete His work, and bring all into the communion of His holy Church.

The Sacraments, on the other hand, are external; they are outward things which have been appointed by God's Providence to be the means of grace. The grace they give is interior, but the sacrament itself is necessarily something external.

Prayer, again, is a *general* source of grace, by which every individual, as an individual, applies to God as to his Father. It is the road open to every one of God's rational creatures; they speak to Him, and He hears them. The language of every human heart is in the ears of the great Creator, no matter how

poor and unknown the suppliant may be. "The prayer out of the mouth of the poor shall reach the ears of God, and judgment shall come for him speedily" (Ecclus. xxi. 6); and "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and till it come nigh he will not be comforted, and it will not depart till the Most High behold" (Ecclus. xxxv. 21).

The Sacraments, however, are the special endowment of God's Church—that is, the special means of grace which our Lord has established to supply the wants of those who are the members of the Church He has established upon earth. The prophet Zachary says: "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zach. xiii. 1). The sacraments are this open fountain—or, rather, they are the seven springs of that one great fountain of grace—the Precious Blood of our Lord; and they are for "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem"—that is, they are reserved exclusively for those who have become members of the Church of Christ by Baptism. Baptism is the door by which men are admitted to the Sacraments, and no one who has not entered by that door can partake of the grace bestowed by them.

We have a twofold kind of relation to Almighty God—we are His children in right of our creation and redemption; and we are His children, in a higher sense, by special adoption as members of that corporate body which He has established upon earth, and it is as members of this body that we have a right to the grace of the Sacraments. These two relations do not interfere with one another; but, on the contrary, one is the completion and perfecting of the other. We need the help of prayer to enable us to receive the Sacraments, and we need sacramental grace to enable us to live up to the dignity of Christians to which we are called. Those who are out of the Church's pale can pray; God gives them the grace to pray, and hears their prayers; otherwise there would be no road open for their conversion. Moreover, He bestows upon them all the graces that they need, according to their necessities and dispositions of heart; but they cannot be partakers of the special grace of the Sacraments, because these are the fountains provided for those only who are the actual members of the Christian Church.

But people will sometimes ask, "How comes it that there are any such external fountains of God's grace? How can such a spiritual thing—a thing which belongs so exclusively to the soul—be annexed to external actions, and to the use of purely material things, especially when our Lord says: "The time cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth" (St. John iv. 24).

External Sacraments depend upon a visible Church. Without such a Church there can be no Sacraments; and, on the other hand, we can hardly imagine a visible Church to exist without something like Sacraments Since it has pleased God to make His Church a visible, corporate body—a city set upon a hill—a fold in which His sheep are gathered together—it follows almost of necessity that in this Church there are sacramental forms. A number of men can only be bound up into a corporate body by external signs obvious to the senses, since men, as a society, cannot have any knowledge, or take any notice of things which are simply internal. The very idea of a body of men is of a number of men united together by some external, visible tie; and if this body of men is one united together, in virtue of a covenant which God has made with them, they must be united together by something which is an external sign of God's covenant. So it was in the Old Law: there were great sacramental rites by which God's people were united into one body—rites which signified the covenant of God with men, and which were, at the same time, the instruments of spiritual blessings to those who received them.

The New Law is, in a particular manner, the dispensation of grace, and therefore it is only natural to find that our Lord has willed that the very sacramental bonds by which men are united into one body should, at the same time, be the fountains of the special graces which it was the very object of His Church to bestow. Our Lord compares His Church to a fold, and He says: "By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and he shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures." In these words He explains to us that, as members of the Church, we are not only to be visibly united, but are to have access to special pastures—that is, to the special means of grace which His bounty has prepared for all who are within the pale of His Church.

The members of the Church are united together in a special manner by the Sacraments which they receive in common; we are united by our spiritual birth in Baptism, by which we are made members one of another, "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism;" and, again, the Holy Eucharist, the great means by which spiritual life is to be maintained in us, is also the great bond of unity—the Holy "Communion;" "for we being many are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (I. Cor. x. 17).

The Catechism tells us that "a sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls." We have here the three conditions required

for a sacrament. It must be something *outward*—that is, something which we can see or hear, or which in some way comes under our senses; otherwise, it could not be a sign of grace to a visible community of men. A sacrament, however, is not merely a sign of grace. The special characteristic of the Sacraments is that they are not merely the signs, but they are the instruments, of grace, and this not accidentally, but by the direct institution of Christ.

In the Church of God a vast number of outward signs are used which are not sacraments. There are pictures and images, prescribed forms of prayer, and ceremonial of all sorts. You see the candles lighted round the altar, and the smoke of incense ascending before it, and all the beautiful things used in the service of God. These outward signs are intended for many purposes: some are symbolical, to teach the people the meaning of what is going on; some are devotional, to assist us in raising our hearts to God; and some are intended to give grace to those who use them properly. These are sometimes called *sacramentals*, because, in a certain way, they resemble the Sacraments; but they give grace in quite a different manner.

The things that are blessed by the prayers of the Church—such as the holy water, the blessed candles, the ashes, the palm branches—are all intended to be means of grace to those who will use them—partly because they help us to raise up our minds to God, and partly through the efficacy of the prayers with which they were blessed; but to these things no promise of grace is attached. The Sacraments, however, give grace because they have been instituted by our Lord for this purpose, and therefore must give grace to those who receive them worthily.

The Sacraments are the instruments of the Precious Blood—that is, they are the channels by which our Lord pours into the souls of men the stores of grace and merit which He has purchased for us by His Precious Blood. "Of His fulness we all have received" (St. John i. 16); and every grace we receive, and every merit we may acquire, comes from that treasury of grace which He has laid up for us by His most blessed Passion. It does not matter in what shape grace comes to us—whether it is by our own prayer or by the intercession of the saints, or by the outward ordinances appointed for that special purpose. In all cases the grace we receive comes from the merits and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This being so, it is an essential condition of the Sacraments that they should be "ordained by Christ." He alone has a right to appoint the channels by which His merits shall be conveyed. He alone can convert into instruments of grace the inanimate

creatures which are used, and the words and actions of men which make up the external part of the Sacraments. Other rites and ceremonies the Church can ordain—all that is intended to instruct and edify her children the Church can appoint at her pleasure. It is her office to do so; but those sacramental rites which are to convey Divine grace to mankind must all be directly instituted by our Lord Himself. We cannot, indeed, in all cases tell exactly when it was that He instituted them, or the precise words in which He made His will known; but, most certainly, every sacrament was instituted by our Lord Himself, and was appointed by Him for the sanctification of His Church.

If we think of this, my dear brethren, it explains all difficulties. Why should these insignificant external acts produce such wonderful consequences? Why should these few drops of water, or this anointing with oil, carry with them such priceless treasures? Why? Because in them our Lord is working—the hands of the external minister of the sacrament are seen; but it is the internal Minister, the true High Priest, who does the work: "My Father worketh until now, and I work." St. Augustine says: "He it is who baptizes in the Holy Ghost; let Peter baptize, He it is who baptizes: let Paul baptize, He it is who baptizes: let Judas baptize, He it is who baptizes," and so of all the other Sacraments. It is our Lord who works in them, and by them applies His remedies to our souls. We cannot wonder that, in His hands, even the most contemptible things of this earth should become powerful instruments.

If, my dear brethren, we could always realize this, and bear it in mind, what a love and reverence we should have for the Sacraments! If, for instance, when you went to confession you could bring yourself to think, not of the commonplace surroundings—the confessional, the familiar forms of words—if, instead of these, you could see our Lord waiting to receive you, and could hear such words as those which He used when, "stretching forth His hand, He touched the leper, saying: 'I will; be thou made clean'" St. Matt. viii. 3)—if you could realize our Lord's presence in this way, how different would be your feeling! Again, if you always remembered that the graces you receive in the Sacraments were nothing else but the fruits of our Lord's Passion, and the price of His Precious Blood, you would value them much more than you now do. You could not be indifferent or careless if you felt that your soul was to be sprinkled, as it were, with the sacred drops "of the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (I. St. Peter i. 19).

The Catechism tells us that "the Sacraments always give grace to those who receive them worthily;" and this brings me to speak of the *way* in which the Sacraments act upon our souls, and the conditions necessary for receiving them worthily. The marked distinction between prayer and the Sacraments shows itself in the way in which they produce their effects, as well as in other things. When we pray the grace of God is given in answer to our own exertion, and is generally proportioned to it. Our Lord says: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be open to you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (St. Matt. vii. 7); and again St. James says: "You ask and you receive not, because you ask amiss" (St. James iv. 3). If we ask well and diligently, we receive abundantly; but if we ask amiss, we receive according to our petition. "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap of blessings" (II. Cor. ix. 6).

In the Sacraments, however, God does not deal with us in the same manner. They are the fountains of the Lord—the "open fountain for the house of Israel;" and we are to "draw water in joy" from them. We must come with such dispositions as to be capable of receiving the waters of life. Like the woman mentioned in the Holy Scripture (IV. Kings iv. 5), we must bring vessels to receive the sacred oil of God's grace, which is miraculously poured out; but it is not our labour which provides it, but God's fountain which pours it out. In the Sacraments it would seem as if our Lord said to us, as God said to the children of Israel: "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Ex. xiv. 14).

This does not mean that we need not take trouble to prepare ourselves for the Sacraments. On the contrary, the more perfect our preparation the greater the grace we shall receive, since our Lord "fills the hungry with good things." The greater capacity we bring the greater will be the abundance with which we shall be filled.

The Sacraments, then, my dear brethren, are in all respects a complete contrast to prayer in the way in which they bestow grace. Prayer is an inward act, whilst the Sacraments are external signs for giving grace; prayer is for all mankind, without exception, but the Sacraments are the special privilege, and treasure of Christ's Church. In prayer men must toil—they must ask and seek and knock, and the Lord will grant grace according to their exertions; but in the Sacraments it is Christ who works, and we have only to receive. In the one we draw water painfully, "for the well is deep;" in the other our Lord

Himself gives the water which shall become a "fountain of water springing up into life everlasting" (St. John iv. 14).

These two great instruments of divine grace must, as I said before, be used together; as one is not meant in any degree to take the place of the other, but each is intended to be the completion and perfection of the other.

The Israelites, as they went out of Egypt, had to march through the desert to the promised land, and on their way we are told how they came upon fountains of water and green palm growing beside them, and they "encamped by the waters" (Ex. xv. 27). We may well compare the Church of Christ struggling on in this world—in "a land without way and without water"—to this painful march through the desert, where almost every step was a battle, and every man was in danger of fainting by the way; the Sacraments are the fountains provided by the roadside—they are the fountains of strength, the fountains of consolation, by which the Catholic Church and her children are enabled to withstand the labour and the heat of the day.

Again, we may liken the life of each individual Christian to the march through the desert to the promised land, and think how graciously our Lord has instituted the Sacraments as refreshing springs at all the painful and difficult places on the way, at all the turnings of road, as we may consider them. As soon as the Christian is born the sacrament of Baptism receives him, marks him as the child of God, clothes him with the garment of grace, and sets him forth on his way; when childhood is past, and the time for fighting arrives, and the enemy is about to come against him in force, the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the sacrament of Confirmation, to make him the good soldier of Christ, and arm him against the time of need; when he comes to the great turning-point of life, and enters the married state, or else dedicates himself to the ministry of the Lord, the sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders are ready to equip him for the new career he is undertaking; and when at last the pilgrim, worn out and wearied, can no longer fight for himself, but "his enemies have encompassed him round, and beaten him flat to the ground," then, in his trouble, his Lord comes to meet him with the sacrament of Extreme Unction, to supply him with all the graces he will need at the last moment of his trial.

But, besides all these, there are two which are not for any passing emergency, and cannot be compared to springs in the desert. They are needed throughout the Christian's whole career, and can only be likened to the manna which God rained down upon His people every day, or the water from the rock;

"and they drank of the same spiritual drink, and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ" (I. Cor. x. 4).

The sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance are the daily manna and the fountain of purification, without which no one can safely pass through the desert of this life.

SERMON LXVII

Visible Signs.

"That man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me: Go to the pool of Siloe and wash. And I went, I washed, and I see" (St. John ix. 11).

WE read in this history how our Lord was pleased to make use of an elaborate outward ceremonial in order to give sight to the blind man. He made clay, and spread it on his eyes, and then sent him to wash in the pool of Siloe. He could, of course, have cured him without this. Our Lord might have worked the cure of the blind man by a word, as when "He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm" (St. Matt. viii. 26); or He might have done it without a word, as when "virtue went out from Him" and healed the poor woman who had merely touched the hem of His garment.

This miracle, my dear brethren, and a great many others which we read of in the Holy Scripture, illustrate the sacramental system — that is, that it is the will of God to connect great interior, or supernatural, effects with the use of very simple things. It is hardly necessary to give instances of this, for the Old Testament is full of them—as, for instance, when the prophet Eliseus "struck the waters with the mantle of Elias that had fallen from him," "and they were divided hither and thither" (IV. Kings ii. 14); or, again, when he sent Naaman the Syrian to "wash seven times in the Jordan" (IV. Kings v. 10), and so to be healed of his leprosy.

These outward actions were things of no value of themselves, and yet God chose to make them the instruments of His power. It may be that this use of exterior signs is suitable, because man himself is such a mixture of the visible and the invisible, of the tangible and intangible, of body and spirit; but, at any rate, it is clear that it *is* God's will to use external symbols in this way.

In the Old Law Almighty God appointed a vast number of rites to be observed, and attached to them the greatest possible importance, and by them conferred many of His favours. "Keep, therefore, the precepts and ceremonies and judgments which I command thee this day to do. If, after thou hast heard these judgments, thou keep and do them, the Lord thy God will also keep his covenant to thee, and the mercy which He swore

to thy fathers" (Deut. vii. 11). Here we have the "precepts, *ceremonies*, and judgments" made the condition of the promised mercy. In the New Law our Lord has done the same thing, in a different way, by establishing His Sacraments as external signs of grace. In the Old Law the symbols enjoined were striking and majestic—to fill with awe the minds of men; but in the covenant of grace the outwards rites are more humble, more secret, more gracious, but, at the same time, infinitely more fruitful and life-giving.

For the external part of the Sacraments three things are required, which are—matter, form, and minister. The matter of a Sacrament is some external thing, or some rite or action, which is perceptible to the senses, so as, in some way or other, to represent the grace which is inwardly conferred. Thus, the pouring of the water is the matter of Baptism; the imposition of hands and unction are the matter of Confirmation, and so forth. These actions represent the *sort* of grace which is conferred upon the soul by their instrumentality. Besides matter there must be *form*—that is, some words must be used with the matter, to give it a definite significance or shape. The mere pouring of the water would have no definite meaning by itself; but when it is joined to the words—"I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"—it is the outward sign of the inward grace which Baptism confers on the soul.

In addition to matter and form, you must have a minister—that is to say, some person who has the power to apply the matter and form—or, rather, the outward actions cannot really exist, as the matter of sacraments, unless there is some one who has power to do them. Each sacrament has its proper minister. In Baptism any one can be the minister in case of necessity. In some sacraments a priest is required, and others can be conferred only by a Bishop. There are, moreover, two sorts of power belonging to the ministers of the Church, which are the power of order and jurisdiction. The power of order is that power bestowed by the sacrament of Holy Order—which no earthly power can take away—and jurisdiction is the power granted to the legitimate pastors of the Church to exercise authority in her name. In some of the sacraments the power of *order* is necessary and sufficient—that is, every priest validly ordained must have the power of administering them; but in others the power of *jurisdiction* is also required—so a priest cannot administer them unless he has jurisdiction, or authority, as well as valid Orders. You often read, for instance, of the duty of going to confession to a priest "approved by the Bishop." This means that a priest cannot validly administer the sacrament of

Penance, unless he is "approved" by the Bishop of the diocese, and has received jurisdiction; or, as we commonly say, has "faculties for hearing confessions."

The outward parts of the sacraments—the matter, form and minister—vary with each sacrament. In some the matter and form have very little resemblance or analogy with the matter and form of the other sacraments; and, indeed, it is not always easy to say, with certainty, what constitutes the matter and what the form. We class the sacraments together as the means of grace, as if they were all alike, but, in reality, each one is distinct and like nothing else, and the resemblances which we trace between them are very far from being complete.

There is a great deal to be said about the dispositions necessary for receiving the sacraments. They are our "Saviour's fountains," and the "living waters" poured into our souls are abundant in proportion to the capacity we have for receiving them. Those who approach the sacraments with a great purity and preparation of heart—with "hunger and thirst after justice"—will receive abundantly; whilst the careless, the idle, and those whose hearts are full of the world, will receive but very little. Oh, my dear brethren, these sacraments are a great responsibility for us all! What abundant graces and help we might receive every day if we were only ready to accept them! And yet, in the midst of all this abundance, we remain dry! Are not a great many Christians like Gideon's fleece, which remained dry whilst everything around was drenched with dew?

The disposition necessary for receiving a sacrament is that there should not be any hindrance in the way of the gift it is intended to bestow, and, therefore, as the effects of the sacraments are various, it is necessary to describe them in detail.

Of the seven sacraments, there are three which can never be repeated under any circumstances. If it is certain that they have once been validly received—whether well or ill, lawfully or unlawfully—they cannot be received again. If there is a doubt whether they have been properly administered, it is quite lawful to give them again *conditionally*—that is, with the condition that they are only to take effect *in case* the sacrament has never been really received; but, unless there is some such doubt, it would be a sacrilege to repeat them.

The sacraments which can never, under any circumstances, be repeated are Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Order. Each of these three sacraments makes you something which you were not before, and gives you something that you cannot lose, or, as it is said, impresses a mark or character upon your soul.

Let us for a moment consider, my dear brethren, what is

meant by these words, "a mark or character." You have all received at least some of these divine marks, and it would be well for you if you realized more fully what their meaning and effect are. A mark on your soul means that God has raised you to a new rank, a dignity you had not before—that He has given you a new position, and a new place in His creation, in which to stand before Him for ever. If you have once received such a dignity you can never again be as if you had not received it; it marks you out for ever in the sight of God and His holy angels, and is of itself an invaluable gain, which can never be lost. It cannot be lost, indeed, but it may be turned into misfortune. You may apostatize from your calling, and disgrace your rank, and so turn a blessing into a curse, but you can never be as if you had not received it.

The sacrament of Baptism gives you the stamp and rank of a Christian, and with it the right of a specially adopted son. "And because you are sons, God hath sent the spirit of His son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). When once you have been thus made the sons of God you can never lose this rank and undo this adoption; you may be unworthy, and stain your baptismal robe; you may, like the prodigal son in the parable, leave your Father's house, and squander the riches He has bestowed on you, living riotously, but you can never cease to be a son. This rank and relationship with the Living God must either be a glory in heaven, or an exceeding ignominy in hell. Which is it to be for us?

Confirmation, again, is another step. A distinct rank in the Christian army has been bestowed upon you. You are no longer merely Christians; your are the soldiers of Christ and the chosen temples of the Holy Ghost. A fresh jewel has been given you for your eternal crown, one step higher and nearer to the throne of God, to which you would never have been entitled if you had not been confirmed. It is for this reason that the Church desires to confirm even little children in danger of death, that they may not be deprived of the dignity bestowed by the Sacrament, even if they do not need its special helps. But here, again, is a danger: if you are unfaithful to this call, and degrade this dignity, you do not lose it, but you turn it to your own condemnation. 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (I. Cor. iii. 16).

The same applies, with still greater force, to the dignity of the priesthood conferred by the sacrament of Holy Order. The sacrament impresses upon each one who receives it an indelible

mark, and to each one may be applied the words of the Psalmist: "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedeck" (Ps. cix. 4); and, as a priest, each one of us will have to be judged.

To receive any one of these three sacraments validly the only mental disposition is consent; you must at least be willing to accept the proffered dignity. When it is a question of accepting a favour, those who do not refuse are considered to accept, and if there are any not in a condition to accept, those who act for them *assume* that they accept. In this way, as little children cannot themselves consent to the dignity bestowed upon them in Baptism, the Church accepts it on their behalf, and they are validly baptized in their unconscious infancy.

But "character" is not the only effect of the sacraments; they are also generally meant to give certain distinct spiritual assistance, and also the *capacity* for obtaining this assistance. By this I mean that they are intended not so much to give a passing spiritual help for an emergency, as to give a power to be used, or a store to be drawn upon, to which we can return again and again, or we may, perhaps, say a capital to be traded with. St. Paul says to St. Timothy: "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands" (II. Tim. i. 6). What does this mean but that the grace bestowed is like a habit which can lie dormant and useless within us, or, on the other hand, can be stirred up into vigorous action?

Those who receive the sacraments to which such special help is attached must of necessity receive the right to obtain this help, even if they receive them in such a manner as to be incapable of any *present* benefit from them. For instance, the sacraments of Holy Order and Matrimony are intended to give those who receive them the necessary graces for performing the duties of the states of life upon which they are entering. However carelessly or badly people may receive these sacraments, they will always have the capacity for obtaining the necessary graces of their state, if only they will put themselves into a condition to make use of them. The effect of these sacraments *revive* for all those who are in a state of grace, so as to become a permanent source of strength to those who will properly employ them. It is obvious, however, that those who receive these sacraments carelessly lose many special graces which they can never recover.

Besides the sacramental graces of this sort which are given, the sacraments have all another object, which is either to give or to increase sanctifying grace in our souls. This is the grace which makes us the friends of God, and everything else is subservient to

it. All holiness simply consists in having an abundant store of sanctifying grace, and everything in religion is meant to assist us in obtaining, preserving, and increasing it; and therefore the sacraments, as the great means of sanctification, are specially intended to be channels of sanctifying grace.

They are sometimes divided into sacraments of the living and sacraments of the dead—a distinction which has reference to their office of bestowing habitual grace. Baptism and Penance are called sacraments of the dead, not as if *any* sacrament could be received after death, but because they are intended to *give* sanctifying grace to those who are deprived of it. The grace of God is the supernatural life of the soul, and the sacraments of the dead are those sacraments which are meant for sinners who are deprived of this supernatural life, to enable them to recover it.

The other sacraments are called sacraments of the living, because they are not intended to give the first grace, but to preserve and increase the store of grace in the souls of those who are already living the life of grace. To receive any one of the sacraments of the living worthily, therefore, it is necessary to be free from mortal sin—that is to say, to be living in the grace of God; whereas Baptism and Penance only require a *readiness* and proper preparation to receive this grace.

Any one therefore receiving Confirmation, or Holy Eucharist, or Order, or Matrimony, or Extreme Unction in a state of mortal sin is guilty of a sacrilege by profaning one of the fountains of Divine grace. When it is a question of the Holy Eucharist, people generally understand this well enough; every one knows that it is a mortal sin to make an unworthy Communion; but people do not always think enough about it when they receive some of the other sacraments—when they are married, for instance. It is necessary, however, to be in a state of grace in order to receive any one of the sacraments of the living, and it is the duty therefore of all who receive them to examine carefully into the state of their own consciences, and, if necessary, to prepare for them by a good confession. To receive the two "sacraments of the dead" it is not, of course, necessary to be in a state of grace, but you must be in dispositions to *receive* grace, otherwise you would commit a sacrilege by receiving the sacrament in vain. Those who are to be baptized when grown up, and all who receive the sacrament of Penance, are bound to have that sorrow for sin without which pardon cannot be granted. Those who have not a sincere sorrow for the sins they have committed, and a real intention not to commit sin for the future, are incapable of receiving pardon; and therefore no sacrament can ever forgive them their sins. But of this I shall have to speak later on.

These, then, are the conditions for receiving any sort of grace in the sacraments; you must be free from mortal sin, or in a condition to receive the pardon of mortal sin, as the case may be, since unrepented mortal sin absolutely prevents the sacraments from producing their sanctifying effect in the soul. If you are not in these dispositions, you not only fail to receive any grace, but you offer a great insult to Almighty God, by making His sacraments void.

To receive the sacraments *profitably*, however—that is, to obtain from them all the grace and blessing they were designed to bestow—requires a great deal more than merely being free from mortal sin. It is one of the great failings and misfortnnes of ordinary Christians, my dear brethren, that they receive the sacraments in such a way as to derive from them only a part, and sometimes a very small part, of the treasures of grace they were meant to give. The sacraments are abundant and unfailing fountains, but our capacity for grace is sometimes very small, so that the want of good dispositions hinders a large part of the intended effects of the sacraments.

It is important for us to consider this, because it is a very serious evil to hinder God's grace within us, and to "make void," to a great extent, the instruments of our sanctification.

If we are in such disposition that the sacraments can do very little for us, and, therefore, the treasures of Christ's Precious Blood are, to a great degree, wasted upon us, it is a misfortune, even if we do not actually receive them unworthily. If our souls are such hard and stony ground that a great part of the good seed of God's grace is wasted, and, instead of bringing forth fruit a hundred-fold, scarcely brings forth any fruit at all, we may be sure that God will make us responsible for our want of good dispositions.

The greatest of all dispositions is that of desire. Our Lord says: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill" (St. Matt. v. 6); but *do* we hunger and thirst after grace when we approach the sacraments? If not, we cannot expect to be filled. This is the secret of the little good which many people derive from their confessions and Communions. They have no great desire, and therefore they get but little. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxx. 11). These were words of God to the Jews, and they are addressed to us also when we receive the sacraments. Have a great and earnest and burning desire to obtain all the graces designed for you, and to frustrate no part of them, and then you will have no reason to complain that you receive little grace.

"He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away" (St. Luke i. 53).

If, instead of this great desire, you are indifferent, and have no real wish for an increase of grace, but perhaps think in your heart that you do very well as you are, and are not inclined to be much better, then it is not likely that the graces you receive will do much more than just keep you as you are. Our Lord, in the Apocalypse, addresses this reproach to the angel of the Church of Laodicia: "Thou sayest I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked" (Ap. iii. 17). People do not exactly say, "I am rich and have need of nothing" when they approach the sacraments, but very often they do not know *how* wretched and miserable they are, and, therefore, are very far from having the great desire for God's grace which they ought to have.

The grace of God, moreover, is given for a purpose—to enable men to advance in perfection. It is given for *progress*, and if people have not any idea of making progress, but, in reality, mean to stay just as they are, they are not in a good condition to receive grace.

This happens either because they are inert and slothful about religious things, or else because they harbour some love, or mean to go on in some way of life, which is inconsistent with perfection. In the Old Testament we read very often of some of the Kings of Juda—how they served God, and did their duty very well in the main; but it is added, "Nevertheless, he took not away the high places" (III. Kings xxii. 44). So it is with a great many Christians—they are good up to a certain point; but yet they will not "take away the high places"—they allow something to remain in their life and conduct which is a perpetual hindrance to the operation of God's grace. It is just this want of readiness to co-operate loyally with the graces the sacraments are intended to confer which causes them to produce such limited effects in our souls.

There is one thing more to be mentioned concerning the sacraments, and that is the ceremonies employed in their administration. Whenever the sacraments are solemnly administered, in addition to the essential "matter" and "form" appointed by our Lord, there is a certain ceremonial established by the Church. For example, in the Holy Eucharist, in Baptism, Confirmation, and most of the sacraments, an elaborate ritual is used, to which the Catholic Church attaches great importance. The Council of Trent declares that, "if any one says that the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church, used in the

solemn administration of the sacraments, can, without sin, be despised or omitted by the ministers, or that they can be changed for others by the pastors of different churches, let him be anathema."

These ceremonies are appointed for many purposes. They are a kind of safeguard for the essential rites on which the efficacy of the sacraments depends. When the exact words and actions which the priest has to use throughout are carefully regulated, there is little danger of any change being heedlessly made in what is essential.

The ceremonial consists of two parts. The Church ordains that prayers should be said to ask of God for the special graces the sacraments are designed to convey, since prayer ought to be united with the sacraments; and there is a special efficacy in those particular forms of prayer which are consecrated by the authority of the Church. No prayers that men can say in private can have the same weight as those solemn forms in which are, as it were, the voice of the Catholic Church. In addition to prayer, the Church appoints certain ceremonies to be used to express, in an external, visible way the effects which the sacraments are intended to bestow. For instance, we shall see how beautifully the "white garment" and "burning light" explain the effects produced in Baptism.

St. Paul says: "If the minstration of death engraven with letters upon stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance which is made void, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather in glory?" (II. Cor. iii. 7.) If the ordinances of the Old Law, which was to pass away, were so beautiful and solemn, the rites of the New Law—which are intended to bestow on men the graces purchased by the Precious Blood of Christ — ought certainly to be surrounded by every ceremonial which can inspire our hearts with reverence for them.

The external things which the Church has appointed to be done in the ministration of the sacraments are all intended to make us love and reverence the fountains of Divine grace, and make us daily more grateful to that loving Saviour who has appointed them for our help and refreshment on our journey through this life to the promised land.

Think, my dear brethren, of all the sacraments as the channels of the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and see Him working in them, and you cannot fail to love and reverence them as you ought. If we were only as much accustomed, as we ought to be, to dwell, in spirit, at the foot of the cross, and were

full of a tender devotion to the Passion of our Blessed Lord, we could never neglect His sacraments. "They shall look upon Him they have pierced." Let us look tenderly and lovingly at the Sacred Wounds of Jesus, and think of all that He suffered for us upon the cross, and that His Precious Blood is the price of our redemption, and then we shall not fail to make good use of all the means that He has appointed to convey to us the merits of His passion and death.

SERMON LXVIII.

Baptism.

"But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may declare His virtues who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (I. St. Peter ii. 9).

Of all the favours that God has bestowed upon us, my brethren, there is none so great as that of the special adoption and vocation by which He has called us "out of darkness into His marvellous light." The special instrument of this adoption is the sacrament of Baptism, which "makes us Christians, children of God, and members of the Church." We are going to-day to dwell on the effects of this sacrament, because of its own incalculable importance, and that we may never undervalue the gifts God has bestowed upon us in it, or forget the responsibilities we have undertaken by receiving it.

Baptism is the gate of the Catholic Church—and by it we receive a right to all the privileges given by Christ to His Church; we become members of that "Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28); and, as members, we are made capable of receiving the sacraments which our Lord has instituted for His Church. By Baptism we become "His people and the sheep of His pasture," and the right to be members of that one fold which our Lord has established on earth, and to "go in and go out and find pasture" (St. John x. 9).

The special gift of Baptism is the adoption of sons which is bestowed on us; and with this adoption a number of other great privileges are bestowed. "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons: whereby we cry Abba—Father" (Rom. viii. 15). The consequence of this adoption of sons is that we put on a new character, and become, as it were, a new man—"who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24). With this new character of sons, we become heirs of the kingdom of God, by a title which no man can take from us—"and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). Every one, therefore, who has been baptized has a claim to be, for all eternity, the son of God, and has been made the heir of His kingdom—and has even now a right to reckon

himself fellow-servant and fellow-member with all the angels who surround the throne of God.

"Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God" (Eph. ii. 19). "Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem" (Ps. cxxi. 2). Our feet are now but in the vestibule—the outer court of that heavenly Jerusalem of which we are the chosen members by our Baptism.

It is impossible to say too much, or to think too highly, of the immense dignity and inheritance bestowed by Baptism, which was once given to us, and is now daily given, by the free bounty of God, to every little child that is baptized.

The adoption of sons is accompanied by, or rather brought about by, the infusion of sanctifying grace. By this grace is washed away the guilt and stain of original sin, in which we were born, and, with it, every stain of actual sin which may have been incurred. It is the misfortune of the human race to be born in original sin, and, as the Catechism tells us, "all mankind have contracted the guilt and stain of original sin, except the Blessed Virgin, who, through the merits of her Divine Son, was conceived without the least guilt or stain of original sin." All others are born in "that guilt and stain which we inherit from Adam, who was the origin and head of all mankind;" the sin of Adam, our first father, descended upon us, so that we are born deprived of our birthright of original justice; and not only deprived of our birthright, but weighed down by a great burden of weakness and misery. We are born liable to temptation and prone to evil: "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). It is the object of the sacrament of Baptism to remedy this misfortune, and to replace us in the holiness lost by original sin. By Baptism our birthright is restored to us in a supernatural way, when we are "born again of water and the Holy Ghost;" and in Baptism our Lord puts on us the "first robe"—that most perfect and spotless garment which comes fresh from the Precious Blood of Christ.

From the consideration of these great privileges, given in Baptism, we learn how precious it is, and that we cannot do without it. It is the one sacrament of absolute necessity. The other sacraments are necessary in certain cases, and to provide for certain wants; but Baptism is necessary as the means of entering into the kingdom of God, and becoming a partaker with Christ. Of this sacrament is true, in the strictest sense, what our Lord said to St. Peter: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (St. John xiii. 8). "Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His

death" (Rom. vi. 3). It is the special way in which Almighty God wills that men should become partakers in our Lord's Passion and merits. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned" (St. Mark xvi. 16). "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 5).

From the absolute necessity of Baptism two things must naturally be concluded. The first is a matter which hardly need be mentioned to Catholics—the duty of having their children baptized without the least unnecessary delay. When God is ready to bestow such a priceless boon upon their children it is clear that parents cannot run even the smallest risk of frustrating the designs of His bounty by their own carelessness, and, therefore, good Catholics are never satisfied till the children have been baptized. The other thing to be considered is about *doubtful* Baptism—that is, when you cannot say for *certain* that Baptism has been validly administered. Whenever there is any real ground for doubting whether a person has been properly baptized, he is bound to be *conditionally* baptized. It is no use to say that there is a great probability that the Baptism was valid, that it might appear to be a reproach to those who professed to administer the sacrament; all that is as nothing when compared with the absolute necessity of receiving, without any doubt, the sacrament which makes you the child of God and the heir of the kingdom of heaven.

It is on this principle that the Catholic Church acts when Protestants are converted to the faith. They are, generally speaking, baptized on condition, not from any distrust of the validity of the sacrament when conferred by those out of the Church, but simply because there appears to be sufficient reason for believing that some of them, at any rate, have either never been baptized at all, or else that the matter and form has been applied in such a manner as to make the validity of the sacrament at least doubtful. As a general rule it is quite impossible to be certain in any particular case, and, therefore, in England the Church has commanded that "all converts from Protestantism shall be conditionally baptized, unless it be made most clearly evident that, in their Baptism, all things respecting the application of the matter and form have been duly performed."—*First Provincial Synod.*

Although the sacrament of Baptism is so universally necessary, yet there are two ways in which its place may be, in some measure, supplied to those who have not the opportunity of being baptized. The first is the Baptism of blood. It happened

not unfrequently in the pagan persecutions that men were converted to Christ, and shed their blood for Him, without ever having been able to receive Baptism. In their case the exceeding charity which induced them to lay down their lives supplied the place of the sacrament, and their martyrdom washed away all stain of sin, and opened for them the kingdom of heaven. Thus, when St. Alban, the first English martyr, was led to death, the executioner was converted, and, throwing away his naked sword, he fell at the martyr's feet, and begged to die with him, or in his place. He had his wish, and was beheaded with St. Alban, and so was baptized in his own blood.

Again, the place of the sacrament may be supplied by desire. The Council of Trent declares that no one can be saved "without the laver of Baptism or the desire of it"—by which it is meant, that those who turn to God with love, and sorrow for sin, and the desire of Baptism, may be saved, even if they cannot, in fact, receive the sacrament. It may easily happen, and no doubt often does happen, that people are deprived of the sacrament of Baptism, although they sincerely love God, and desire to do His will, and would certainly receive this sacrament if only they had the opportunity. In such cases the want of sacramental Baptism is supplied by the Baptism of desire. The Baptism of blood and the Baptism of desire are not sacraments, and do not give the mark or character which Baptism imprints, but they are extraordinary means by which a similar favour is bestowed upon those who cannot receive the sacrament.

It is not, however, our concern to consider what are God's dealings with those who have no opportunity of receiving the sacraments. St. Paul says: "What have I to do to judge them that are without?" (I. Cor. v. 12). What we have to do is to be very exact in availing ourselves of the means of grace God has given to us.

Let us now speak of Baptism a little more in detail. To begin with, there is but one Baptism, "one body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism" (Eph. iv. 4). Every one who is baptized at all receives the same Baptism, and is made thereby a member of the same Church of Christ. It does not matter by whom the sacrament may have been administered. The visible minister is only an instrument acting for our Lord, who "baptizes with the Holy Ghost (St. Mark, i. 8). To use the words of St. Augustine, which I before quoted, "Let Peter baptize: He it is who baptizes; let Paul baptize, He it is who baptizes; let Judas baptize, He it is who baptizes." When you hear people speaking of the "Church of their Baptism," it is plain that they are forgetting

the very essence of Baptism, which is to be the door into the one true Church of Christ—so that the Church of their Baptism cannot *possibly* be anything but the true Church of Christ. Every little child who is baptized, no matter by whom, is a member of the Catholic Church, and remains a member of it till he separates himself from the communion of that Church.

The matter and form of the sacrament are described in the answer of the Catechism, which says: "Baptism is given by pouring water on the head of the child, saying at the same time these words, 'I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" any ordinary water will do and any one may be the minster of the sacrament in the case of necessity. A case of necessity means, of course, when there is danger that a child may die unbaptized. In such a case, when a priest cannot be had, or cannot be had soon enough, every Christian is bound to act as minister — and every one ought therefore, to understand exact what has to be done.

Except in necessity, however, no one but a priest may baptize, so a child ought to be taken as soon as possible to the church ; or, if it is too ill to be taken so far, the priest should be sent for to baptize it. The Baptism given in the church is *solemn* Baptism—that is, Baptism accompanied by all the ceremonies commanded by the Church ; at home these ceremonies are left out, and the Baptism is *private.* But the ceremonies should be supplied as soon as the child can be taken to the church, because they are a solemn form by which the child is dedicated to God, and special blessings asked for it by the solemn prayers of the Church.

Most people have seen the ceremonies of Baptism often enough, but perhaps without giving much consideration to their meaning. When you go to the church to be present at the christening of a little infant, you do not always think enough of the deep meaning of those external actions by which the sacrament is surrounded—that they are symbols of the mighty effects which God's grace is working by means of those few drops of water.

Baptism is, as we have said, the gate of the Christian Church, and the ceremonial of each Baptism commences by a solemn introduction into the church. Whilst the child is still at the church door the priest asks : "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" "Faith." "And what doth faith bring thee to?" "Life everlasting." "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind : and thy neighbour as thyself." After various other prayers the child to

be baptized is led into the church, and brought to the font with the words: "Come into the Temple of God, that thou mayest have part with Christ unto life everlasting," whilst the Apostles' Creed is recited by the sponsors. The baptismal font itself, placed near the door of the church, recalls to you that by Baptism you enter into the great society of the Church of God; the water it contains, which is to be the channel of such wonderful graces, is solemnly blessed on Holy Saturday, and consecrated with the holy oils.

The holy oils used in Baptism are the oil of catechumens and the holy chrism. These holy oils are consecrated every year on Maundy Thursday by the Bishop of the diocese, and the oil remaining over at the end of the year is consumed. By calling them *holy* oils we mean that the prayers of the Church have been offered, with great solemnity, to beg of God to make these oils the instruments of special blessings in the sacraments and consecrations in which they are used. The oil of catechumens is so called because in the early Church those who were preparing for Baptism—the catechumens—were anointed with it before they were baptized. The chrism is the oil with which the chalice, the altar-stone, and everything specially consecrated to God is anointed, and the use of it in Baptism points out to us how solemnly we are dedicated to Almighty God.

The ceremonies used in Baptism are of various kinds: there are prayers and symbolical actions. Some of these prayers are "exorcisms"—that is, prayers that God will not allow the evil spirits to have power over the child that is chosen to be God's temple. We read in the Gospel how our Lord "threatened the unclean spirits," and commanded them to go forth; and when He sent out His Apostles He gave them power "to cast out devils" (St. Mark iii. 15), and this power was entrusted not to His Apostles only, but to the seventy-two disciples whom He sent out in His name; "They returned with joy, saying: 'Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy name'" (St. Luke x. 17).

It is this power which the Church uses when, in Baptism, she commands the devil to leave the servant of God whom "our Lord Jesus Christ has deigned to call to His holy grace and benediction, and to the font of Baptism, and never to dare to violate the sign of the cross" then solemnly signed upon its forehead. The Church also prays for the child, that God may "illuminate His servant with the light of His intelligence, and cleanse him and sanctify him, and give him true wisdom to be worthy of the grace of Baptism, and to hold fast a firm hope, right council, and holy doctrine, so as to be worthy to become

the temple of God, and to deserve that the Holy Spirit should dwell in him."

Such is the tenor of the Church's prayers at Baptism, and they are accompanied by several very significant ceremonies: the child receives the blessed "salt of wisdom to become a propitiation unto life everlasting;" the priest touches the ears, using our Lord's own words, "Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened;" and anoints the breast and the shoulders with the holy oil of catechumens. These ceremonies are intended to represent, and to carry out, the entire consecration to God which takes place at our Baptism; the consecration of the senses and of the heart; of the breast to be forward in battle, and of the shoulders to bear the cross of our Lord. This consecration is completed after the Baptism, by the second anointing with the holy chrism, with which the new Christian is solemnly dedicated as the temple of God.

To denote the special "sanctifying grace" which is bestowed in Baptism, two most beautiful ceremonies are used. The priest after the Baptism, lays upon the child a white robe with the words: "Receive this white garment, and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ" —and then he presents to the newly-baptized infant a lighted taper, saying, "Receive this burning light, and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame: keep the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials thou mayest meet Him in the company of all the saints in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever. Amen."

Nothing can express in a more striking way the effect of the sanctifying grace which has just been given—the grace which clothes the soul with a garment of spotless innocence, and lights up that burning fire of charity which our Lord came to kindle upon earth.

Besides these ceremonies, two solemn professions and promises are made: "Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his pomps?" "I do." And again: "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord? Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church?" "I do." These are our "Baptismal vows"—the solemn promises made for us when first we become the member of Christ's Church: to be true and faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to renounce His enemies, and at the same time to hold fast till our death the holy faith in which we were baptized. By these promises we shall most certainly be judged, and it will be well for us if we recall them often to our minds, and distinctly renew them from time to time.

What, then, is it we have renounced? The devil, with all his works and pomps. We have promised to renounce Satan, as the enemy of God, and to pay him no allegiance; we have promised to renounce his works—all these evil deeds which spring from "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I. St. John ii. 16). We have promised also to renounce the "pomps" of the devil: that is, all those baits and snares by which he lures men on to destruction—"the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life," by which the good seed is choked, and made to produce no fruit.

I must here say a word about godfathers and godmothers, and the duties they undertake. The office of sponsor is a very important one, and one on which the Catholic Church lays a great stress. At a solemn Baptism there should always be godfather and godmother, but never *more* than one of each—and, indeed, only *one* sponsor is enough if there is any difficulty in getting both. The office of godfather and godmother is to answer for the children at the font, and to undertake, as far as they *reasonably can*, to watch over their religious education. It is obvious that no one but a Catholic can reasonably undertake the charge of seeing children educated in the Catholic faith, and therefore it is not lawful to have Protestant godfathers or godmothers. The sponsors only undertake to do what they *reasonably* can, for the children's education—that is, what can be done without any unreasonable interference or difficulty, so that no one need be afraid of the responsibility. It gives to the sponsors an occasion for exercising their zeal and charity, should opportunity offer, but does not bind them to anything more.

It is necessary, however, to be careful in accepting the office of sponsor, for another reason; by doing so you contract a kind of "spiritual relationship" with the child, and also with the child's parents. This spiritual relationship is in some respects like a blood relationship, and therefore it is, by the law of the Church, an impediment to marriage. A person who had stood godfather or godmother to a child could not afterwards marry the child, or the parents of the child, without a dispensation, and therefore it is necessary to see that difference in the age and other circumstances are such as to put a marriage out of the question.

I have gone rather minutely into the ceremonies of Baptism, my dear brethren, because it is most desirable that we should take an interest in all the rites of the Catholic Church, and endeavour to see the full beauty and meaning of them all. These ceremonies bring before us the usages of the ancient Church, and, moreover, make us feel how near we are to that spiritual world which we cannot see, and yet is so closely con-

nected with the material world around us. They remind us, also, of our own responsibilities, and recall to our thoughts what we ourselves have received and undertaken in Baptism.

I will, therefore, conclude my observations on the sacrament of Baptism by a few words on the special duties of that Christian character which was conferred upon us by our Lord at the baptismal font. "Keep they Baptism so as to be without blame." That was the charge given to us, my brethren. How have we attended to it? At your Baptism our Lord chose you, and you chose Him. He said to you, as He once said to the Jews: "You shall be my people, and I will be your God." He gave Himself to you, and you accepted Him as your inheritance. "The Lord is a portion of my inheritance and of my chalice: it is Thou that will restore my inheritance to me" (Ps. xv. 4). How have you kept this solemn agreement? Have you been faithful, or have you gone over to those enemies you renounced? Have you been loyal or disloyal? Do you glory in that Christian name which has been given to you, or are you sometimes ashamed of our Lord and His holy faith?

Again, Almighty God said to you at your Baptism, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. ii. 7). What sort of sons have you been to Him? "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born of many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). Have we been "conformable to the image of His Son"? or have we, at least, *tried* to make our lives conformable to the standard He has given to us?

God not only made us His children, but He endowed us, as sons, with a rich treasure of grace, which He freely poured into our souls. What use have we made of all this grace? It is true of a great many that, like the prodigal son in the Gospel, almost the first use they make of their will is to waste the treasure given to them. "Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me: and not many days after the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously" (St. Luke xv. 12). How has it been with us? Have we shown reasonable diligence in using the graces entrusted to us, or have we wasted them, living riotously?

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). Almighty God has not only endowed us as His children, but has loved us as His children "with an everlasting love," and we must ask ourselves, as we shall one day be asked, What return have we made so far, and what return are we now making, for that everlasting love of God of which holy Baptism was the pledge?

"See thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our one great duty in life is to keep unsullied that garment of innocence with which our Baptism invested us. "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27). The brightness of the garment in which we are clothed at Baptism is not our own; but our robes are washed and "made white in the Blood of the Lamb." They are glorious with the merits of Jesus, and shine with the brightness of His Precious Blood. What an ignominy and misery it will be for us if, one day, we have to stand before the judgment-seat of God, not with the bright robe of grace which was given us, but defiled and dishonoured and disgraced, bearing with us the mark and character of Christians only for our greater shame and condemnation.

SERMON LXIX.

Confirmation.

"Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect" (Eph. vi. 13).

I HAVE been speaking, my dear brethren, of the sacrament of Baptism, which makes us the children of God, and now come to the sacrament which gives to us the additional character of the soldiers of Christ—that is, the sacrament of Confirmation. It is not enough for us, in this mortal life, to practise the virtues of children—we must add to these something of the heroism of soldiers. Our Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (St. Matt. xi. 12). Those who have not the courage to be firm in standing up for the cause of God, and sometimes, even, to be stern and violent, can hardly hope to save their souls. For this reason it is that our Lord has established on earth a sacrament from which men may receive the supernatural gift of strength and fortitude to fight the battles of a Christian life.

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1) the Holy Scripture tells us, and, from his cradle to his grave, he is exposed to the attacks of a terrible enemy. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirit of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. vi. 12). Our life is like the march of an army through an enemy's country—there can never be peace, and there is not a moment's security except in watchfulness. If the soldiers stand to their arms, and are on their guard, night and day, they may go on unharmed; but a moment's false security may be their destruction. It is a battle, moreover, in which we *must* be victorious. *Væ victis!* woe to the conquered! It is a miserable thing to be overcome in an earthly battle, and those who are defeated meet but little sympathy—but in this conflict the woe and misery are infinitely greater. Yes, my dear brethren, we *must* conquer, and therefore we must not fail to put on the "armour of God."

A soldier cannot fight without his arms—and in this warfare our arms must be the armour of God. Nothing of our own—no natural qualities that we can bring are of any avail to withstand such an enemy as we have to fight against; and no merely

human armour is able to "extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one." Mere natural courage will not help us—and, indeed, we constantly find that some of those who are the bravest in temporal matters are the weakest and most cowardly in spiritual things; and, on the other hand, that God has chosen the "weak things of the world, that He may confound the strong" (I. Cor. i. 27).

The sacrament of Confirmation has been instituted by our Lord to furnish us with all the arms needed in a Christian warfare, and formally to enrol us amongst His soldiers. In this sacrament the Holy Spirit descends upon us, and consecrates us by the infusion of His grace, and so marks us out for ever as the soldiers of Christ by a special character, and supplies us with the strength to fight our Lord's battles bravely and successfully.

If we would know how important this sacrament is, we have only to see how careful our Lord was that His Apostles should be duly supplied with the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost before they set out on their great mission. He Himself had given them all the powers and instructions that they required, but they needed something more to fit them for their work. "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 8). They must wait for the coming down of the Holy Spirit before they could stir one step.

The Apostles were to win a great victory, and to overcome all the power and wisdom of this world—but it was to be God's victory, not theirs. He was to supply their arms, and He was to be with them in their strife. "You shall be brought before governors and before kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles; but when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to ask, for it shall be given to you in that hour what to speak, for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (St. Matt. x. 18).

The victory was to be the work of God, and the glory of it was to be given to Him. So our Lord commanded His Apostles to do nothing till they had received the special graces for their work, just as before He had told them that they must not be encumbered with worldly goods; "Behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes" (St. Luke x. 4).

Every Christian, my dear brethren, has to fight his battle on the same conditions on which the Apostles fought; the victory must be won by God's help, and, therefore, we must put on the armour of God, and use all the means of grace offered to us.

Let us now see what were the effects that were produced in the Apostles by the coming down of the Holy Ghost, and then we can form an idea of what are the graces which we may expect for ourselves. What strikes us first is the marvellous gift of courage which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon them. Nothing can be more marked than the change that appeared in their conduct from the moment they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Up till that time they had been timid and fearful—fearing the opinions and loud voices of men, and shrinking from the bodily evils and dangers which seemed to threaten them. When our Lord was seized they all abandoned Him, and the most forward amongst them, St. Peter, even denied that he knew Him; and after the resurrection we find them again sitting timidly in a room, when "the doors were shut, where the Disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews" (St. John xx. 19).

After the coming down of the Holy Spirit, when they had received the special grace which was to make them the soldiers of Christ, we find all this changed. St. Peter did not then hesitate to preach Christ to the multitude of the Jews, and to tell them that they had crucified and slain the Holy One of God. Listen to the glorious confession of the name of Jesus which the Apostles made before the Princes, and Ancients, and Scribes—that "there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved;" and, "if it be just to hear you rather than God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." And when the world went on from words to blows, and commanded the Apostles to be scourged, they "went away from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts iv. 12, 19, and v. 41).

The courage which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon them was not merely a passing grace, it was an indwelling and habitual fortitude which enabled them to go on fighting the battles of the Lord, and to stand, without fear, before the tribunal of kings and magistrates, which was to be ready for all emergencies, and, at last, to enable them, without shrinking, to meet death for their faith. This is the type of the courage which the Holy Spirit bestows upon the soldiers of Christ in proportion to their needs; if only they live up to the grace given to them, they never need fail in fortitude, however terrible the conflict may be.

But it was not fortitude only that was given to the Apostles, as courage alone will not make a soldier: they received also a special gift of wisdom. The Apostles had heard the faith from our Lord's own lips: "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (St. Mark iv. 11); and yet, after all, they

did not understand, but remained "foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets had spoken" (St. Luke xxiv. 25). The remedy for all slowness of heart was the coming down of the Holy Ghost: "I have many things to say to you; but you cannot hear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will teach you all truth" (St. John xvi. 12); and again: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (St. John xiv. 26).

The office of the Holy Ghost, therefore, was to complete the teaching of our Lord, by bringing back to the minds of the Apostles all His lessons, and enabling them to understand His words—that is, by the gift of spiritual wisdom. The knowledge of spiritual things is a gift which comes from God, which the learning of this world, of itself, can never bestow, and we must look to God Himself to supply us: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight" (St. Luke x. 21). But even spiritual knowledge is not enough of itself——indeed, the Apostle says: "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth"—and the great and principal gift of the Holy Spirit is is that of divine charity, from which springs the spirit of loyalty and devotion, and all the other qualities of a good soldier of Christ. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5).

It was this divine charity which contained in itself abundantly the piety and loyalty, tenderness towards God, and zeal for His honour, that sent the Apostles out through the whole world to fight against His enemies, and to brave dangers for His sake. The Holy Spirit appeared and rested upon the Apostles in the form of "parted tongues, as it were, of fire," to show that the gift of the Holy Spirit must contain the principle of fervour and devotion as well as of knowledge—that it must inflame as well as enlighten.

I have dwelt on the gifts bestowed on the Apostles so long, because we must not forget that they are the patterns for all Christians. The graces bestowed upon them were for us all, and we were to be supplied, each one according to his necessities, with spiritual weapons like theirs, and it is our own fault if we do not put on the armour of God. It is true, indeed, that they received many supernatural gifts which were not intended for others; but the higher and more spiritual gifts, which the Holy Spirit bestowed on them, were for the Church, to be handed on

through countless channels, from one generation to another, till the end of time, as most precious treasures purchased by the Precious Blood of Christ.

If you would value the graces of the Holy Spirit as you should do, my dear brethren, go in spirit to that upper chamber where the Apostles and Disciples abode, all "persevering in one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and His brethren." They were the Church of God upon earth, completely organized, having full power and authority, wanting in nothing but that spiritual life from on high without which they could not act. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii. 2).

Now the Church has been animated with a divine life; now she has received the fire from on high which shall burst forth from that upper chamber and inflame the whole world, which all ages shall never be able to extinguish. Now that voice has gone forth which has ever since been heard, and which can never be silenced—for "their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the whole world" (Rom. x. 18).

But the Church is for individuals, and it would be to little purpose that all these glorious gifts of the Spirit had been given to her if they had not been so given that each Christian soul should share in them. Our Lord therefore ordained that the gifts and graces of His Divine Spirit should be conveyed to others by the outward and sacramental imposition of hands, as it was miraculously given by the appearance of parted tongues of fire. "Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii. 17).

The Catechism tells us that "the Bishop administers the sacrament of Confirmation by praying that the Holy Ghost may come down upon those to be confirmed: by laying his hands on them, and making the sign of the cross with chrism on their forehead, at the same time pronouncing certain words;" and that the words used in Confirmation are these: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of

salvation. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

In these answers we have expressed the matter, form, and minister of Confirmation. And, first, the ordinary minister is a Bishop only. This means that, although a priest may give Confirmation under special circumstances—that is, when he has received express authority from the Pope—still, generally speaking, no one who is not a Bishop can ever confirm. The reason of this is plain enough; the Apostles themselves all received from our Lord the fulness of the priestly power, with authority to communicate their priestly office to others. They chose out some of the disciples to be their assistants, and gave them a portion of their priestly authority to enable them to do the work entrusted to them. In this way they appointed St. Stephen and the rest of the seven deacons, and sent them to preach and to baptize. St. Stephen, "full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke;" "and Philip, going down to the city of Samaria, preached Christ unto them, and they were baptized, both men and women."

But though they had commissioned these men to act as their assistants in the ministry in some things, yet the Apostles reserved to themselves the power of communicating the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands, and, when the people of Samaria had been converted by Philip's preaching, the Apostles "sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for He was not as yet come upon any of them. But they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts. vi. 8, 10; and viii. 5, 12, 14).

In this manner arose the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and each Order was appointed to assist in the priestly office, and received a share of the priestly power in proportion to their work. As the Church extended, however, it became necessary not merely to appoint assistants, but to send out missionaries to be over the whole work; then the Apostles communicated to them the fulness of the priestly power as they had received it from our Lord, and made them "Bishops to rule the Church of God" (Acts xx. 28). An instance of this is given in the mission of St. Paul and St. Barnabas: "And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them, Separate me Saul and Barnabas, for the work whereunto I have taken them. Then they, fasting and praying, and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away" (Acts xiii. 2).

The Bishops of the Church of God are those who have received the fulness of the priesthood, and to them alone is reserved the power of the imposition of hands, as it was originally to the Apostles themselves.

The outward signs which constitute the matter of the sacrament are two things, each of which, in a different way, represents the effect conferred by it. These are the imposition of hands and the anointing with the holy chrism. The laying on of the Bishop's hand is the outward symbol of the coming down of the Holy Spirit, just as the "parted tongues, as it were, of fire" represented His descent into the hearts of the Apostles. The sign of the cross, made with the chrism, represents the special consecration by which the Christian soul is made the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Christian is marked out for ever as the soldier of Christ. The words: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross; I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation," give a special and particular meaning to these external actions, and express the purpose for which the Holy Ghost is invoked, and explain why the special consecration is given.

We have now to ask how the Christian is to be prepared for this great dignity. It is well to speak of this, my dear brethren, for it is your duty to prepare your children, in due time, to receive our Lord's great gift. Christian parents, do you think enough of this duty? Are you truly anxious to see your children ready to put on the armour of God? or do you, by neglect and carelessness, allow them to meet danger unprepared and unstrengthened? If you were sending your sons out as soldiers for an earthly fight you would not neglect to provide for their safety, that they might come back to you unharmed. How do you act in their spiritual warfare?

The first thing is age. Any one who is baptized is capable of receiving the sacrament of Confirmation; and, in danger of death, it is right to administer it to the children; but the usage of the Church is to confer it at the age of eleven or twelve, when that can be done. That is the time when they have ceased to be mere children, and the serious dangers of life are beginning, and they have to begin a Christian's warfare in real earnest. Age, however, is not enough; they require instruction also. Confirmation may be called the spiritual growing up—the end of their spiritual childhood—by which they are to be made "strong and perfect Christians." "That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work" (II. Tim. iii. 17). Those who are to be confirmed should, therefore, be well instructed in at least such knowledge of the Christian faith and religious practice as is necessary for their state.

We have an example of this previous instruction in the conduct of our Lord to His Apostles. The Holy Ghost was to "teach them all truth;" nevertheless, He taught them with His own lips "the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and so prepared them for the infused knowledge of the Holy Spirit by His own distinct teaching. The reason is plain. The Holy Ghost was to be a teacher, not directly, but by "bringing back to their minds" what had been already taught, and enabling them to understand and appreciate it.

All those who are to be confirmed should understand, not only the nature of the sacrament they are to receive, and the new character and special graces which are to be conferred upon them, but should also have such a knowledge of their faith in all its parts as may be suitable to their age and position. They ought to be prepared, not only by knowledge, but by holiness and devotion; how can any one aspire to become the temple of God, unless he at least tries to be holy, "for the temple of God is holy, which you are" (I. Cor. iii. 17).

The Apostles went through a special time of preparation for the Day of Pentecost, and this, though their lives, spent as they were in the company of Jesus, would have seemed to be preparation enough. "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father;" and they spent ten days in retirement and prayer, in company with "Mary, the Mother of Jesus." Where could they better prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and for His abundant gifts, than in the company of her who was "overshadowed by the Holy Ghost" and "full of grace"?

The essential condition for receiving the sacrament of Confirmation worthily is to be in a state of grace—that is, free from mortal sin; every one, therefore, who is to be confirmed, ought to do his best to secure this state of grace by making a good confession. In addition to this, to receive the sacrament with fruit, you require prayer and meditation, that you may understand and value the gifts the Spirit of God is to bestow. These are: the mark and character of soldiers of Christ, the increased "charity of God," which is to be poured into your heart by the presence of God's Holy Spirit, and certain special "sacramental" graces, or the infused habit of certain virtues—which are commonly called the "gifts of the Holy Ghost." These gifts are not given suddenly and miraculously as they were to the Apostles, but are to remain in the soul like a treasure to be brought forth when required, and to be increased by diligent exercises.

And now, my dear brethren, you may ask what is the use of dwelling upon the details of this sacrament, which most of you have already received? It is a long time since you were confirmed; the Bishop whose hands were imposed on you is long since dead; those who knelt beside you are, perhaps, most of them gone, and the day itself has become but a faint memory. Yes; but the mark that was then impressed upon your soul is still there, and neither time nor eternity can make it fade. You took upon you the character of the soldier of Christ, and, as a soldier of Christ, you will have to be judged.

You have been a soldier of Christ—what sort of a soldier? Have you been loyal to your King and Captain? We know what earthly loyalty is, and what great things men will do and suffer for their king or their cause. Have you shown the same loyalty for your Heavenly Leader? Have you had His interests at heart? Has His honour been to you like your own honour? Have you always stood up manfully for His cause?—or have you betrayed it? The day will come, my dear brethren, when these will be terrible questions for us all. "He who denies me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (St. Luke xii. 9).

But what sort of soldiers have you been? Have you been brave and steadfast, or have you been mere fair-weather soldiers? You know that soldiers are sometimes to be found whose appearance is very imposing, and their uniform is gorgeous; but they are only peace soldiers, and are no use when the shock of battle comes. So there are some Christians who appear to be good so long as there is no trouble or difficulty, but "in time of temptation they fall away." That is not the kind of service which we have promised, and which our Captain expects from us. We cannot be true soldiers unless we are prepared to fight, and, if need be, suffer for our King. "Labour as a good soldier of Jesus Christ . . . . for he also that striveth for the mastery is not crowned unless he strive lawfully" (II. Tim. ii. 3). "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God" (Apoc. ii. 7).

Let us, then, fight, my dear brethren, as good soldiers of Christ, and, if we have to suffer something for our faith and loyalty, let us always think of the words of the Apostle: "You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 4); and remember that our crown will be in proportion to our fidelity.

We cannot, however, fight as Christian soldiers unless we bring to the battle some of the qualities which an earthly contest

requires. It is not enough to have zeal and good-will; we must also be prepared, when need be, for patience and self-denial. "Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they, indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one" (I. Cor. ix. 25). Hence it is that our Lord says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (St. Luke ix. 23). Of ourselves we can do nothing, but, if we faithfully follow Christ and trust in His help, we need fear no enemy.

Let us be good soldiers of Christ, but, in order to be such, we must put on the armour of God to be able "to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, and take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. vi. 13). Amen.

SERMON LXX.

Penance.

"And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion; and, running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him" (St. Luke xv. 20).

So far, my dear brethren, I have treated of the sacraments which can only be once received. These sacraments imprint upon the soul a special character, and mark an epoch in human existence. The memory of them must be carefully treasured up and meditated upon, because of the permanent responsibilities they have brought with them, but they can never be received again. I now have to speak of sacraments of another class—of those, that is, which we may call the sacraments of daily life; these are to be our daily help and continual resource—to be in constant use, as the weapons with which we are to fight our daily battles, and with which we must strike the enemy, not once or twice, but day after day.

It is absolutely essential for us to understand the use of these sacraments of daily life. See how a soldier practises himself in the use of his weapons. Every day he goes through his exercise, that he may be skilful and quick in the management of his arms; and yet it is not more important for him to be dexterous in using the instruments of war than it is for a Christian to understand how to make proper use of the sacraments which our Lord has appointed to help him in his spiritual warfare.

As soon as children are old enough to require and understand these means of grace, they should be most diligently taught what they are, and how best to use them, and then they ought to keep themselves in practice, in order not to forget what they have learned.

To guard against routine—that is, the carelessness arising from long custom—it is very important sometimes to hear or to read instructions and considerations on the use of the sacraments. It is not enough for a soldier once to have learned his drill—he must keep himself constantly exercised in the use of the weapons on which his safety depends in war; and, in the same way, it is necessary for a Christian to be always well instructed in the use of the sacraments of daily life.

These are Penance and the Holy Eucharist. All the other sacraments, of their own nature, can only be used on particular

occasions, when the necessity for them arises; but these two can be used without restriction, whenever we wish to avail ourselves of them. The Holy Eucharist may not be received more than once on the same day—as we shall see—(except under particular circumstances) by a special law of the Church, but we may receive the sacrament of Penance as often as we please. The reason of this is plain: these sacraments are the food and medicine of our souls, and food and medicine are required whenever we are hungry, and whenever we are sick.

I am going to-day to speak of the sacrament of Penance, or, as it is commonly called, Confession. Confession is, strictly speaking, as you all know, only one part of the sacrament, but it is the word commonly used to mean the sacrament of Penance, including *all* its parts.

Those who are not members of the Catholic Church commonly look upon confession as a heavy burden laid upon sinners; but this is a very false view of the question. It is, on the contrary, the way in which Almighty God makes it easy for sinners to return to Him: by which He meets them half way—if I may use such an expression. I have alluded in my text to the way in which the father of the prodigal meets his repentant son. Returning to himself, the prodigal said: "I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And, rising up, he went to his father, and when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and, running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet" (St. Luke xv. 17). In the same way, when sinners "return to themselves," God goes to meet them by a sacrament which is intended to assist their faltering steps, to encourage them in their good resolutions, complete their imperfect penitence, and then restore to them the "first robe"—the robe of sanctifying grace—which they had lost.

When sinners are moved to repentance by the grace of God, and would return from their evil ways, they are frequently almost overwhelmed with difficulties and discouragement; their dispositions are often very imperfect, and their purpose weak and hesitating, and they come, as it were, with faltering steps, like the poor prodigal after his wanderings. Then it is that they sorely need a hand put out to help them; and our Lord has therefore established a sacrament in which His Precious Blood cures all their wounds, and supplies all their wants.

In the earliest of all Christian confessions of faith—the Apostles' Creed—we find one of the articles to be "the forgiveness of sins." This means, not only that God does in some way or other forgive sins, but that in the Christian Church there is some special institution for granting that forgiveness. It would, indeed, be strange if it were not so. Our Lord came down upon this earth to find a remedy for the sins of men, "that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished" (Daniel ix. 24); and St. John says: "You know that He appeared to take away our sins" (I. St. John iii. 5).

As the great object of our Lord's coming was to provide a remedy against sin, it would be hard to suppose that He had not made any special provision for the pardon of sinners; and, therefore, it seems only natural that the "forgiveness of sins" should be one of the most prominent parts of the Christian doctrine. "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner" (Zach. xiii. 1). This prophecy is fulfilled in the Christian Church; the "open fountain" is principally the sacrament of Penance, by which the Precious Blood of Christ is applied for the "washing of the sinner;" and this not once or twice, but whenever human frailty requires it, so that it may well be called an "*open* fountain."

In the Christian law, moreover, Almighty God was to call men to a much closer union with Himself; it was for this that the Son of God became incarnate, that we might come near to God by the "adoption of sons." What our Lord said to His Apostles is, to a great degree, true of all Christians. "I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends" (St. John xv. 15). And, again: "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables" (St. Mark iv. 11). Every Christian is called to a much clearer knowledge of God, and a much more intimate union with Him, than was given to the saints of old, It was only natural, then, that our Lord should establish upon earth some distinct means of purification from sin—something which, in a spiritual sense, might be like the great brazen laver, the "molten sea" (III. Kings vii. 23), which was to stand in the temple for the purification of those who went into the holy place.

When our Lord was washing His Disciples' feet, He came to St. Peter, "and Peter saith to Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me. Simon Peter saith to Him, Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head" (St. John xiii. 8). Our

Lord washes us, first of all, in the sacrament of Baptism, but this washing cannot be repeated; whereas such is our frailty that the best of us go on sinning all our days, in some degree or other; and, therefore, our Lord has provided another laver to cleanse us from the daily stains which we contract.

The Catechism tells us that "the priest forgives sins by the power of God, in pronouncing the words of absolution," and goes on to say that "three conditions for forgiveness are required on the part of the penitent—contrition, confession, and satisfaction." Two things, then, are necessary—one is the power to forgive, and the other the disposition to enable us to receive forgiveness. However complete and unrestricted the power of pardoning may be, it will produce no effect if the person to be pardoned is in such a state of mind as to be *incapable* of pardon. If you attempted to kindle a fire, and the fuel was all saturated with water, you would apply your match in vain, not because the fire would not burn, but because the wood was incapable of being burned. It is necessary for us to say a little about the power of absolution, granted by our Lord to His ministers, and a good deal about the dispositions which are necessary to allow this power to produce its effect.

The Catechism says: "Our Lord instituted the sacrament of Penance when He breathed upon His Apostles, and gave them power to forgive sins, saying, Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." This power was given to the Apostles to be handed on to their successors in the ministry; it was clearly not meant for one generation, but for sinful man in all ages, "even to the consummation of the world." Our Lord had prepared the way for the power He was to give to His Apostles by Himself exercising the power of forgiving sins at a word. "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee;" and, again, He says, "You are clean by reason of the word I have spoken to you."

Moreover, he worked a miracle expressly to answer the objection which we ourselves have so often heard. "He saith to the man sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And there were some of the Scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts, Why doth this man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only? Which Jesus presently, knowing in His spirit that they thought so within themselves, saith to them, Why think you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee, Arise, take take up thy bed, and go into thy house" (St. Mark ii. 5).

Our Lord here seems to claim the power of forgiving sins as "the Son of Man" "on earth," that, when He said to His Apostles, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you," "receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven" (St. John xx. 21), men might know that the Apostles were to exercise in His name the power of absolving from sin.

In order to exercise this power of absolution validly, two things are required—the power of order, and jurisdiction—that is, a priest must not only be properly ordained, but he must also have received authority to act as spiritual judge over some portion of the flock of Christ. A priest therefore must be "approved" by the Bishop of the diocese before he can exercise the power of binding and loosing which he received at his ordination. In case of danger of death, however, every priest, validly ordained, has the power of absolving from sin.

I now come to a more practical consideration. What must the penitent do, and what dispositions must he bring in order that his sins may be remitted by absolution? The conditions for pardon are contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Contrition means a hearty sorrow for past sins, with a purpose of amendment; confession is to accuse ourselves of our sins to a priest approved by the Bishop; and satisfaction is doing the penance given us by the priest. This we all know very well, my dear brethren, but there is a great deal to be said on each of these conditions.

First let us ask, Why should confession be required before we can receive pardon? Our sins are known to Almighty God a thousand times better than we know them ourselves, and it is from Him that the forgiveness really comes; why must we declare them to the priest, who is only His minister? From our Lord's words, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained," it is clear that the Apostles and their successors were to exercise their power of forgiving sins as *judges;* they were to forgive or retain according to the circumstances and necessities of each case; and such a commission necessarily carries with it authority to *hear* each case. Since our Lord has appointed His ministers to act as judges, it is plain that penitents must put before them the case on which their judgment is to be exercised—that is, they must confess their sins.

People are sometimes inclined to murmur at this, as if it were for us to determine the conditions on which God should pardon sin. If we only knew how great an act of mercy it is to forgive us our sins on *any* terms we should never complain of the simple

and easy things which our Lord has appointed as the condition of forgiveness. The difficulties which people make only show how little idea they have of the enormity and misery of sin; if a sinner would only listen to the words of the prophet, "Know thou, and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii. 19)—if he would only take these words to heart, he would not complain of any remedy that our Lord might please to appoint.

It is plain, then, that it is for our Lord to lay down the terms of forgiveness according to His own good pleasure, and that we have no right to murmur. There is a history in the Old Testament which puts this in a very clear light. We are told in the Fourth Book of Kings about Naaman: he was "general of the army of the King of Syria; he was a valiant man, and rich, but a leper." He had heard of the prophet of God, Eliseus, and he made a journey, carrying with him "ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment," hoping to be miraculously cured of his leprosy. "So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Eliseus. And Eliseus sent a messenger to him, saying: Go, and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean. Naaman was angry, and went away saying: I thought he would have come out to me, and, standing, would have invoked the name of the Lord his God, and touched with his hand the place of the leprosy, and healed me. Are not the Abana and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them and be made clean? So, as he turned, and was going away with indignation, his servants came to him, and said to him: Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it: how much rather what he now hath said to thee: Wash, and thou shalt be clean. Then he went down and washed in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was made clean" (IV. Kings v. 1).

Now, my dear brethren, we should all agree that if Naaman had gone away in his anger, and refused to do what the prophet told him, he would have deserved to be a leper for the rest of his life, and no one would have pitied him. What, then, shall we find to say for ourselves if we will not make use of the simple and easy remedy which it has pleased our Lord to appoint as a cure of the leprosy of sin? "If he had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou wouldst have done it"—much more when He asks so little of you.

We may not, therefore, call in question the conditions on which Almighty God pleases to forgive our sins, and it is foolish and presumptuous to think some other way would have been better. It is for our Lord to appoint the remedies He thinks fit, and for us thankfully to make use of them, Moreover, we may be quite sure that the remedies which He has chosen are wise and good in their own nature, and well suited for the purposes for which He has appointed them—even if we do not ourselves see the necessity or advantage of them. "Great are the works of the Lord, *sought out* according to all His wills" (Ps. cx. 2).

It is well, however, to consider the object and utility of the practice of sacramental confession in itself, that we may be able to enter more heartily into the work which our Lord has given us to do. Confession is, of all things, the best calculated to give us a knowledge of ourselves. "To know God, and to know ourselves" is the foundation of a good life, and there are multitudes who go astray because they never look into themselves, and are strangers to their own hearts and to their own sins. The first step of the prodigal was, as we see, to look into himself, and consider the condition in which he was placed—"Returning to himself." Without this self-knowledge repentance is almost impossible. "And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him, Where art thou?" So when we have sinned the first inspiration of grace is to make us find out the condition in which we are, "Where art thou?"

The first idea of all sinners is to hide themselves amongst the branches as Adam did—that is, to put their sins out of sight, so as to hide themselves from themselves. The obligation of confessing our sins, at any rate, compels us to know something about them ourselves, and to know them, not merely in the vague and superficial way in which we make up accounts for ourselves, but with some degree of accuracy, so as to be able to give an account of them to others. The necessity of looking carefully into all that is going wrong is, in itself, a very great check and safeguard. Suppose, for instance, that a spendthrift could be brought to keep an accurate account of every penny that he squandered, so that every foolish item of expense was frequently brought before his eyes, can you doubt that his extravagance would speedily be cured? It is the fact that he does not think what he spends, or what debts he is incurring, that makes him so reckless.

It is the same thing with sinners. Men very often persevere in their sins chiefly because they will never allow themselves to think of them, or to dwell on the great responsibility they are incurring. If a sinner could be brought to look his iniquities

steadily in the face, and to keep an account of them, it would be almost impossible for him to persevere, for any long time, in a state of sin. The Psalmist says: "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me" (Ps. l. 5). If we knew our iniquities as he did we should soon imitate his repentance. The very object of sacramental confession is, if possible, to compel us to know at least *something* of ourselves and our own consciences.

As a general rule, moreover, we all require advice and spiritual assistance. It is a mistake to suppose that a man's "common sense" and conscience will always guide him in matters of right and wrong. However well instructed and enlightened men are, they are generally very bad judges in their own case, and often want counsel in the things that concern their own souls. When St. Paul was converted, and had cast himself down before our Lord, with the words, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the answer was, "Arise, and go into the city, and there it will be told thee what thou must do." St. Paul's conversion was miraculous. The Lord took it out of the hands of men, and was Himself the instrument of his conversion; and yet, the moment his conversion was complete, he was put into the hands of men for guidance. Ananias came to him and said: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus hath sent me, He that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 17).

We cannot, then, well be surprised if our Lord, in the ordinary course of His Providence, refers *us* also to Ananias, and requires us to learn His will, and to be guided by some of His ministers here on earth; and it is just this which He has done in the institution of the sacrament of Penance. People are often very much troubled, and sometimes suffer serious injury, for want of a little good counsel. Sometimes this is by over-scrupulousness, which leads them to see evil where none exists, or to take exaggerated and impossible views of their duty; sometimes, and still more frequently, the evil comes from failing to see the importance of things at the beginning, and thereby becoming entangled in danger and difficulty before they are aware of it.

Confession is, of its own nature, difficult and repugnant; and yet it is the very thing which comes home to the heart of man as the best reparation for crime. The Holy Scripture says: "The just man is the first accuser of himself" (Prov. xviii. 17), and the society of men looks for this self-accusation. Josue said to Achan, when his iniquity was discovered: "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and confess, and tell me what thou has done: hide it not" (Jos. vii. 19). In the same

way, if a man has committed a murder, and is convicted of his crime, everybody thinks that the least he can do is to confess his crime. His doing so will make no difference to himself, or to any one else, and yet it is felt that it is the reparation which he owes to his fellow-men. We sometimes even hear of criminals who are so driven on by the sort of necessity of confessing their guilt that they are willing to give themselves up to justice rather than conceal their sin any longer.

In the same way an honest confession of our sins against God is pointed out to us by nature as one of the best ways of making atonement for our wickedness; and we cannot be surprised that our Lord should have made such a confession one of the conditions of pardon. When the prodigal son returned to his father he began by a humble confession of his fault: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son;" and this confession was followed by a complete pardon. In the same way Christ has appointed for us that we should first confess our sin and then receive His forgiveness.

Confession is also a suitable remedy for sin, because it is so much opposed to the spirit of pride. It is scarcely possible to imagine any act which is a greater humiliation than the confession of sin. To declare one's iniquities, and humbly to profess sorrow, and devoutly promise amendment at the feet of one of one's own brethren, is an act which is strongly opposed to every feeling of self-love and self-exaltation. It is this which makes it so valuable a remedy against sin. A large proportion of our sins have their beginning in pride, and they cannot be effectually cured without some kind of humiliation. It is "the pride of life" which makes men lift themselves up against God and break His Commandments. "The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God; because His heart is departed from Him that made him, for pride is the beginning of all sin" (Ecclus. x. 14). Since pride is the beginning of sin, no remedy can be complete which does not, in some way, involve the subjugation of the pride of man. "Our Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death" (Phil. ii. 8), to purchase the pardon of our sins. It is not wonderful, therefore, that He should require some little humiliation on our part when we come to ask pardon for our own sins.

These, my dear brethren, are some of the ways in which confession is fitted to supply a remedy to the great evil of sin. If we make diligent use of it it will enable us to know ourselves: to see the faults into which we are betrayed, and the dangers to which we are exposed. Confession is, in itself, a remedy to the

pride which is constantly leading us into sin, and provides us with a suitable way of making reparation for our offences; and, in confession, moreover, we shall hear the voice of God, and "it will be told us what we must do." The best reason of all for confession, however, is that it has pleased our Lord Jesus to institute it, and the least and meanest instrument which he has appointed will work more good than all the contrivances which the wisdom of men can design. We are sinners; let us diligently use His remedy for sin, and, if it is sometimes painful and humbling, let us rejoice to share in the pain and ignominy of the cross which He bore for our sins.

SERMON LXXI.

Confession.

"And the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books" (Apoc. xx. 12).

THE sacrament of Penance, my dear brethren, is an anticipation of the great judgment to come. St. Paul says: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world" (I. Cor. xi. 31). These words we may very well apply to the sacrament of Penance; in it our Lord allows us to provide against the terrible day of His wrath, by appearing before a tribunal in which we ourselves are the accusers and witnesses, the judge is a friend and advocate, and the "chastisement of the Lord" is simply that we "may not be condemned with this world."

Confession, then, is the judgment-seat of God upon earth, but it is most unlike that fearful tribunal which St. John describes to us when he "saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works" (Apoc. xx. 11).

The tribunal of Penance is a tribunal of mercy, in which our Lord sits, not as the stern judge to exact the last farthing, but as the Father of the prodigal, only waiting to hear the few words of repentance, in order to be able to clothe his son once more in the first robe. It is the court in which our Lord looks not to His own interests and the claims of His justice, but simply to the benefit of those who apply to Him—that he may show them how to "escape from the wrath to come." The Psalmist says: "Look thou upon me, and have mercy on me, according to the judgment of them that love Thy name" (Ps. cxviii. 132). The sacrament of Penance is, then, the tribunal where we shall find the tender and lenient judgment with which God judges those who love His name.

It is the special terror of the judgment to come that our sins shall be manifested before heaven and earth; that all creation

shall see the treason and ingratitude of men, and that the veils in which sinners hide themselves shall be torn away, and their iniquity disclosed; but in His tribunal on earth our Lord judges in secret. He makes us our own accusers and witnesses, and almost our own judges: he leaves the execution of His sentence entirely to ourselves. Moreover, He covers over all the proceedings of this court with the strictest secrecy, so that not a word may, under any circumstances, be revealed. The priest who hears the confession in the name of God is bound by the most absolute *seal* of secrecy which exists on earth. He cannot reveal anything entrusted to him under this seal, for the sake of any possible advantage that may arise to himself, or to society, or to the Church; he cannot speak of what has happened in confession to *any one*, either to the penitent himself or to any other.

In all external things, then, the tribunal of Penance is the opposite of God's great judgment, but still it must in some way resemble it, because it *is* God's judgment, and His judgments must always be real, and right, and true: "Thou art just, O Lord, and all Thy judgments are just, all thy ways mercy, and truth, and judgment" (Tob. iii. 2). We will now, therefore, consider some of the qualities which must accompany a confession of sin to make it fulfil the conditions necessary for the sacrament.

The first of all qualities in Confession is honesty: to be sincere and straightforward. A confession which is not honest is a detestable hypocrisy, hateful alike to God and men. If, for example, any one were to go to Confession, and to tell very carefully all the little things he had done, but were to leave out those of importance, it is quite clear that his Confession would only be a mockery. It would be far better for him if he did not make a Confession at all, because such an insincere Confession is a direct affront to Almighty God, and a profanation of His sacrament.

The Catechism says: "A person who conceals a mortal sin in Confession tells a lie to the Holy Ghost, and is guilty of a great sacrilege by making a bad confession." We cannot better illustrate this than by considering the history of Ananias and Saphira, from which the expression "telling a lie to the Holy Ghost" is taken. Ananias was a man who, with Saphira his wife, sold a piece of land, and pretended to give the price of it to the Church, but "by fraud kept back part of the price of the land, his wife being privy thereunto: and bringing a certain part of it laid it at the feet of the Apostles. But Peter said: Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst

lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud keep part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost" (Acts v. 2).

Now consider, my dear brethren, how exactly the conduct of Ananias corresponds with that of a man who goes to Confession and wilfully leaves out what he is bound to confess. He goes to his confessor and solemnly declares, before God and the court of heaven, that he has sinned by thought, word, and deed: through his fault, through his most grievous fault; and then he goes on to declare in what his fault has consisted; but, instead of doing so honestly, he "by fraud keeps back a part"—and a serious part, which he perfectly well knows will render all that he is doing a profane mockery. He tells a lie to God, too, exactly in the same way in which Ananias told it: he tells it to the priest who is sitting there, not for himself, as if it were his own personal concern, but in the place of God—just as Ananias lied to St. Peter when he was representing Almighty God as the ruler of the Christian Church.

A bad Confession is, therefore, one of the greatest of sacrileges, and also one of the most foolish and dangerous of crimes that can be committed. It is foolish because the person who makes a bad Confession takes a great deal of trouble with no other result than offending God, and inflicting a fresh wound on his own conscience. He knows quite well that by doing so he can get no pardon and peace, but that, on the contrary, he is making his return to God very much more difficult. After his bad Confession, he is bound to confess all his sins over again, including the sins fraudulently kept back, and the sin of sacrilege which he has just committed. If he found it hard to make a good Confession before, it will be still more difficult now, and he has, as it were, poisoned the very source of grace, and put himself in great danger of perdition.

Sincerity, therefore, is the first essential to Confession—and with real sincerity of purpose every difficulty easily disappears. It is not, however, quite enough—you must add reasonable diligence to your sincerity. You go to "render an account of your stewardship"—and it would be a mockery to pretend to do this if you did not take pains to make it reasonably complete. You profess to give an account of your sins as you know them yourself—but, by this, you also profess to endeavour to know them yourself. A penitent is not bound to use any extraordinary or unusual care to obtain complete accuracy in his

account of himself, but he *is* bound to use at least the care which he would employ in any other serious and important work.

He is bound to confess all mortal sins. I will not here go into the question of the exact distinction between mortal and venial sin, and what it is that constitutes the immense difference that there is between them. It is enough to say that mortal sin is always something that is done with full knowledge and deliberation. If you know that a certain action, or thought, or word will grievously offend Almighty God, and when you have time to remember this, you deliberately commit it, you are guilty of mortal sin. Every such sin must be told in Confession—if you remember it—and it is a sacrilege to omit it.

You are not bound in the same way to mention venial sins, because these are "more easily pardoned" than mortal sin—and there are other ways in which it can be forgiven—and still more, because such sins of their own nature are very frequent, and it would be very difficult to give a complete account of them.

Mortal sin is sometimes called the *necessary* matter of the sacrament, because by divine law we are obliged to submit every mortal sin of which we are conscious to the "power of keys"—that is, to the judgment of the tribunal He has left on earth. Venial sin is called *sufficient* matter, because, although we are not obliged to confess venial sins, it is desirable to do so, and they are a sufficient reason for receiving sacramental absolution.

In making your Confession it is, generally speaking, profitable, and, for many reasons, desirable, to include all the principal venial sins of which you are guilty. You would give a very unsatisfactory view of your conscience if you mentioned nothing that was not actually a mortal sin; just as a steward would give a poor account of his stewardship if he made no mention of the smaller affairs entrusted to him.

To be complete, then, a Confession must declare all mortal sins, and, for your own greater advantage, should include all venial sins that can easily be remembered; but it wants something more. It must also say something about the frequency and the circumstances of sins. If, for instance, you confessed a sin, and didn't say whether it had happened once, or was the constant habit of your life, it is clear that you would not have made a complete and straightforward Confession. You are bound to tell the number of times you have sinned; but here is the difficulty. There are a few things which come back to your mind in a very distinct form—you can remember one, two, or three occasions on which a sin has been committed; there all is plain

enough. Generally, however, things are remembered vaguely, as more or less habitual faults, and you cannot recall the particular occasions. In such things there is no use in attempting imaginary numbers. For instance, if you say that you have lost your temper twenty times, or fifty times, a week, or since your last Confession, it sometimes conveys no particular idea either to yourself or any one else. You can form a much better notion in such cases by considering how far the sin is habitual—whether it is *very* frequent, frequent, or rare, than by merely guessing at the number of times.

And now for the circumstances which attend sins. It is plain that some circumstances must be mentioned, or the Confession would only be a sham. Very often one act is a sin against two commandments, and you must explain that you have broken these two commandments. For instance, a lie which did your neighbour a serious injury—ruined him, perhaps—would be a sin against *two* commandments. It would be a sin of lying, and a sin of injustice by doing an unjust injury to your neighbour. If you merely said that you had told a lie, you would not have honestly confessed your sin. The same would be true if a thief had broken into the church and stolen some of the things consecrated to God. If he were simply to accuse himself of the theft, and leave out the sacrilege, it is plain that he would have made a very imperfect Confession, and so of a great many other cases. Whenever, then, the circumstances change the *nature* of the sin committed we are bound to mention them.

But what about other circumstances—about those things which do not alter the nature of the sin, but give it an individual character, and make the act somewhat better or worse? There is a good deal of difficulty about this question. Your object is to give an honest and true account of yourself, and one which will render it possible for you to receive advice suited to your necessities. It is, generally speaking, impossible to do this without saying *something* of the circumstances under which things have happened. If you confine yourself to general terms, and to words which may mean almost anything or nothing, so that it is impossible for your confessor to understand what it is *precisely* that you mean to convey, it is plain that he cannot advise you, and must be talking at random. In such a case, even if you have said enough to make your confession an honest one, you cannot expect much assistance. It is, therefore, generally expedient to say enough of the circumstances of the case to make it quite clear what sort of thing you mean to confess, without going into histories and without mentioning other people.

Let me here say a word or two about generalities. It is very easy to accuse yourself in general terms, but there is no humility in it. However strong you make your words, it is generally mere waste of time, and is, occasionally, only vanity in disguise. If you declare that you are a very great sinner, or that you do not love God enough, or that you do not correspond as you ought with God's grace, you are only saying what all the rest of the world might say, and your confessor is not in the least the wiser. There is much more difficulty and much greater humility in confessing the most common-place, every-day sin, in plain terms, which show precisely the wrong you have been doing.

It often happens that sins are omitted in confession by accident, without any fault. This does not interfere with the substantial "integrity" of the confession, and all sins—those forgotten as well as those remembered—are forgiven by the sacrament, if it is received with the due dispositions. Supposing, however, that grievous sins, which have been forgotten, afterwards come back to your remembrance, you are strictly bound to confess them, although they have already been forgiven.

Next to integrity of confession comes simplicity of manner. The language becoming such a tribunal should be free from any affectation of fine words or unnatural phraseology. You should say what you have to say in the most straightforward, natural, and every-day language you can think of. People sometimes consider it necessary to begin every sentence with, "I accuse myself," or other such artificial expressions. It is plain that you are accusing yourself, and there is no use going on saying so. People sometimes also think it necessary to confess their sins in some special order—for instance, "against the First Commandment," "against the Second," and so forth. The effect of such an arrangement sometimes is to make a simple thing difficult and complicated. The obvious plan is to mention first what strikes you as most serious and important, and not to trouble yourselves with any other arrangement.

The very essence of confession is self-accusation. "I said I will confess against myself—my iniquities to the Lord: and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin" (Ps. xxxi. 5). A confession, therefore, is not a mere narration—a mere talking about oneself; it is *accusing* oneself. You know what an accuser does. He stands forward and tells the worst he knows; he puts things in the plainest and strongest way, and doesn't try to shelter the person whom he is accusing, but brings him before the judge as a criminal. This is the way in which we are to confess our own sins. Our Lord has left it to us to be our own accusers, and we must do the work honestly; we must tell our own faults, and

acknowledge them and admit them as faults we are sorry for, without trying to make out a good case for ourselves. It is very important to remember that Confession ought to be sincere self-accusation, in which we are not to bring in the faults of our neighbours, and are not to talk unnecessarily of our own doings, or excuse our faults. "Incline not my heart to evil ways, to make excuses in sins" (Ps. cxl. 4). To make excuses in sins is at all times an evil, but especially when we appear as our own accusers. If there are any real excuses, or palliations, for our faults, we may be quite sure that Almighty God will give us full credit for them, and the more so if we are not too anxious to find them for ourselves.

We ought not to speak of the faults of others, as I have just said, because Confession is not intended to give an opportunity for accusing others, but that we may tell our own faults. In Confession you are never bound to disclose the name of another person, and ought not to do so; and it is a great abuse of the sacrament when people have a great deal to say about their neighbours which they pretend to consider necessary to explain their own faults. Generally it is quite unnecessary and useless.

In confession we profess to give a complete account of our sins, either for the whole of our lives or for a certain period. On special occasions it may be expedient to go over the sins of a lifetime, but generally we only include the time since the last confession. To give such an account the confession must embrace the *whole* of our conduct, and sins of omission as well as sins of commission; not only the bad things we have done, but the good things we have left undone. It is, however, a very common thing, my dear brethren, for people to take one or two points of their conduct, and give all their attention to them, whilst they neglect the rest. They are perhaps scrupulous and over minute about the few points to which they attend, but they leave a large part of their conscience unheeded.

It is just as if you had a large field to cultivate, and you gave all your labour to one little corner, and were perpetually working at it, whilst all the rest was lying uncultivated. Instead of doing this each one ought to look carefully at all the duties and responsibilities which God has laid upon him, and, as far as possible, satisfy himself that he is at least trying to do what God requires of him.

The great judgment, my dear brethren, will pass over nothing; our hearts, our tongues, our hands will all have to answer for their deeds; we shall have to be judged as husbands and fathers, as priests and laymen, as members of society and as working men. We must render an account of our doings as subjects of the

Queen and members of the Church, as well as servants of God, and the faults which we have committed in every one of these positions will be revealed. It is necessary therefore that when we judge ourselves we should carefully consider all the duties for which we are responsible.

I have now to say a few words about the choice of a confessor. The Church gives us the widest power of choosing for ourselves. You may make your confession to any priest who is approved by the Bishop of the diocese, or, as we commonly say, has faculties for hearing confessions. Some sacraments ought properly only to be administered by the parish priest, but Penance is *not* one of these. It is evidently the intention of the Church that each one should select the confessor whom he thinks most likely to profit him, and no one has a right to be offended if you make the freest possible use of this privilege. You can go to whom you please, and change as often as you like, just as your own feelings and convenience may suggest.

A good Christian in this matter should think of *nothing* but the welfare of his own soul; he should not care who is pleased or who is displeased by the choice he makes; he should not consider who is pleasant or unpleasant, but simply think which confessor will best help him to heaven.

There are two things, however, to be considered in making this choice. It is not expedient to change your confessor without some reason; it stands to reason that you cannot get much advice or assistance from a director who knows nothing about you, and frequent changes are generally made out of levity and curiosity. It is not expedient to choose a confessor who lives a long way off, so that you cannot easily have access to him. On great occasions you have a perfect right to consult anybody you please as to your difficulties and wants, but it is very foolish to be dependent upon any one at a distance for the sacraments of "daily life." Above all things, do not attach too much importance to the particular priest to whom you make your confession. When this is the case, when people are so much attached to one confessor that they cannot be persuaded to go to any other, and would rather remain away from the sacraments, it looks as if they cared more about the words of a man than about the sacrament instituted by our Lord.

What we have to look to in all the sacraments is our Lord. The priest is only His minister, and, whether he is wise or simple, good or bad, the effect of the sacrament is, in substance, the same. You may obtain accidental assistance from the wise direction of a prudent confessor, but the principal thing is to receive the grace which our Lord has provided for you in His

sacrament. Our Lord can, if he will, make Himself heard to you by the mouth of the most ordinary confessor as well as by the wisdom of the wisest, so that we ought not to think too much of the particular priest who administers the sacrament.

It will be well to conclude what I have been saying by a few words about the confession of sins in the early Church. It will do us good to hear what the early fathers say on the subject—partly that we may see how their ideas agree with our own, and partly because they speak in very strong and determined language, such as preachers do not always like to use in the present day. In their time men were full of faith and fervour, and did not require to have everything made so easy for them.

Tertullian was a priest at Carthage nearly seventeen centuries ago, and I would recommend his words to those who make great difficulties, and are very shy in the confession of their sins: "Brave art thou in thy modesty truly, bearing an open front in sinning, and a bashful one in praying for pardon! . . . Verily, the concealment of a sin promises a great benefit to our modesty —namely, that if we withdraw anything from the knowledge of men, we shall, of course, conceal it also from God! And is it thus, then, that the thoughts of men and the knowledge of God are compared? Is it better to be damned in secret than absolved openly? It is a miserable thing thus to come to Confession. For by sin we are brought into misery; but when we are to be penitent the misery ceases, for it has become salutary."

These, my dear brethren, are very plain and strong words, and a priest now may use them as freely as Tertullian did in the second century. Again, he says: "If thou drawest back from confession, consider in thy heart that hell-fire which Confession shall quench for thee; and first imagine to thyself the greatness of the punishment, that thou mayest not doubt concerning the adoption of the remedy. When, therefore, thou knowest that, against hell-fire, after that first protection of Baptism ordained by the Lord, there is yet, in confession a second aid, why dost thou abandon thy salvation? Why delay to enter on that which thou knowest will heal thee? Even dumb and unreasoning creatures know, at the season, the remedies which are given them from God."

Confession, in the early ages, was sometimes made publicly; but in general as we now make it—that is, in private, each one to his own confessor. I will, therefore, finish by quoting what another father says on the choice of a confessor, which may be useful to us now. The writer is Origen, a priest who lived in the Eastern Church about the same time as Tertullian—that is, in the second and third centuries; he says: "If a man becomes

his own accuser, while he accuses himself and confesses, he at the same time ejects the sin and digests the whole cause of the disease. Only look diligently round to whom thou oughtest to confess thy sin. Prove first the physician to whom thou shouldst set forth the cause of thy sickness; who knows how to be weak with the weak, to weep with the weeping; who knows the art of condoling and sympathising: so that, in fine, thou mayest do and follow whatever he shall have said, whatever council he shall have given, he who shall first have shown himself a skilful and compassionate physician. If he shall have understood and foresee that thy sickness is such as ought to be set forth and cured in the assembly of the whole Church, and, thereby, perhaps others be edified, and thou thyself easily cured, this must be prescribed with much deliberation, and on the very experienced advice of that physician" (Waterworth's "Faith of Catholics," vol. iii. pp. 42, 43, 48).

SERMON LXXII.

Contrition.

"Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God" (Joel ii. 13).

CONTRITION is the most important of all the conditions necessary for the forgiveness of sins. We know this very well, my dear brethren; but, for all that, many people do take but little trouble to move themselves to contrition when they prepare for confession. I have already spoken of the conditions necessary for receiving the sacrament of Penance, but it will be as well to repeat them in a few words.

On the priest's part there must be a valid absolution. Absolution is the sentence of forgiveness, without which the priest cannot exercise the power of remitting sins entrusted to him by our Lord. A judge on the bench can only exercise his authority according to certain legal forms, and in the same way a priest, in the tribunal of Penance, can only forgive sins by using the necessary form of words. To make this sentence of pardon available for the remission of sins, three conditions are necessary on the penitent's part, which are contrition, confession, and satisfaction. I have already spoken of confession: it is accusing ourselves of our sins—that is, of at least all the mortal sins of which we are conscious. Satisfaction is "doing the penance given us by the priest." This means that, at the time of our confession, we must be willing to accept the punishment imposed upon us for our sins. This punishment is almost invariably according to the present discipline of the Church—some short prayer which we undertake to say with that intention. If all these conditions for the sacrament are duly supplied, it is quite certain that we receive the pardon of our sins, because we have our Lord's promise that the sentence pronounced on earth shall be ratified in heaven. "Whatsoever they shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xvi. 19).

Now, in one sense, all these parts of penance are equally important: if you wilfully omitted any one of them, and so refused to comply with the conditions which our Lord has laid down,

your sins would certainly not be forgiven. In another sense however, there is the greatest possible difference in their importance. It might very easily happen that you were quite unable to make any proper confession of your sins, or to do anything by way of satisfaction for them, and yet you might receive the sacrament of Penance; or, again, it might be quite impossible to receive the sacrament at all, and yet your sins might be forgiven without it. Without contrition, however, sin can never be forgiven under any circumstances. All the parts of Penance are, commonly speaking, necessary for the forgiveness of sin, because our Lord has chosen to appoint them as the means of pardon in the Christian dispensation; but if He had willed it, He might have appointed any other outward signs to forgive sin, which would have done as well; but sorrow for sin is, *in itself*, essential for the reconciliation with Almighty God—that is, we cannot conceive that God would ever, in any dispensation, or under any circumstances, forgive sins without repentance.

The reason of this is plain. God is in Himself infinitely perfect, so that even "the heavens are not pure in His sight" (Job xv. 15). "The Lord our God is righteous, and there is no iniquity in Him" (Ps. xci. 16). By His own divine nature He hates sin with an infinite hatred, and it cannot ever cease to be odious and abominable in His sight. When a man sins he chooses evil, and adheres to it, and, as it were, identifies himself with it. He has taken part against God, and, as the Apostle tells us, "Changed the truth of God into a lie: and worshipped and served the creature, rather than the Creator who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25). As God can never change, and can never cease to hate iniquity, there can be no reconciliation between a sinner and his God, so long as the sinner adheres to his sin. There must be a change of heart and of will before there can be any forgiveness. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive" (Isaias lv. 7). Let the unjust man forsake his way, and *then* there is forgiveness; but until he changes there can be none.

If any man, therefore, has been so unfortunate as to offend his Maker by sin, there is only one remedy, and that is a change of heart and will, a regret for the past, and the intention of amendment for the future. No external means of pardon can be of any avail without this change; no zeal or good works can buy for you the forgiveness of sins unless you have first turned away from them and renounced them. Our Lord's words addressed to sinners are very plain and decided. "Unless you shall do

penance, you shall all likewise perish" (St. Luke xiii. 3). The word which we translate here by "do penance" means principally, and first of all, a change of mind, although it also includes those things which change of mind would bring with it, as when our Lord speaks of "doing penance in sackcloth and ashes;" but we cannot too carefully remember that the first and most essential part of it is the "change of mind."

The next thing we have to consider is the sort of sorrow which is meant by the word contrition. A good many people seem to fancy that when they have read over the "Act of Contrition" contained in the prayer-book, they have done all that is necessary —at least, they do not seem to trouble themselves very much beyond that. We can learn a good deal about the sort of sorrow for sin which is required from the very name given to it. "Contrition" means "breaking," and it means that the sorrow we are to have should be such as can, in some sense, be described as "a breaking of the heart," or, perhaps, it may be better said "a breaking of the will." We all know the sort of intense sorrow which is described as resulting in a broken heart. Our sorrow for sins ought, then, to be one which we are not ashamed to compare to this kind of sorrow. Nothing can better explain the real, hearty, energetic kind of sorrow that we ought to have for our sins than the name of contrition, which is applied to it.

It may be objected that it is almost impossible for any ordinary Christians, when they are grieving for their sins, to feel the sensation of grief and the pain of heart which they experience on some other occasions. That is very true, but we might take our sins to heart a great deal more if we liked, and it is our own fault if our sorrow so little deserves to be called a breaking of heart, as it does.

Listen, my dear brethren, to the words of a great penitent—words which are very familiar to us all—and then think how far they represent the feelings which we present to our offended God when we seek His pardon: "I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed. I will water my couch with my tears." "For Thine arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me. There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy wrath; there is no peace to my bones, because of my sins. For mine iniquities are gone over my head, and, as a heavy burden, are become heavy upon me." "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me" (Ps. vi., xxxvii., and l.).

If these were the words which the thought of his sins put into

the mouth of the penitent David, we may, at any rate, have some little feeling and warmth in our sorrow when we come to ask for forgiveness.

Now, however, let us get from generalities to practical details, and let us consider precisely what are the requisites for a true contrition. The Catechism says that "Contrition is a hearty sorrow for our sins by which we have offended so good a God, with a firm purpose of amendment." The first condition is that it should be supernatural—that is to say, it must be a sorrow arising from supernatural motives. If you were very sorry for your sins, but your grief arose from natural consideration—that is, from something belonging to this world—it would not be contrition, however earnest your sorrow might be. Supposing a man's sin has brought with it evil consequences, and he grieves because actual punishment has come upon him, or because he is suffering from fear and remorse, as Judas did after his treason: his sorrow is not contrition. A natural sorrow for the evil effects of sin very often leads men on to a true contrition, and God sometimes sends temporal punishments to the wicked, that they may see the evil of their ways, and be led to repentance; but still it is not sufficient, in itself, for contrition. In the parable of the prodigal son we have an example of the way in which the grief and pain arising from temporal distresses lead people on to a real sorrow for their sins. "After he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country . . . . and he began to want; and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat," and then it was that he began to "return to himself." From this beginning he went on step by step to a very deep and humble and loving sorrow for his offences, and to complete reconciliation with his father.

There are many motives for being sorry for sin which are very good in themselves; a person who has sinned may grieve very heartily for his crime, simply on account of a natural feeling of the pain and sorrow he has brought on others, or of the disgrace into which he has fallen, or other similar reasons. These motives for sorrow are very useful as helps to lead sinners to a true contrition, but they are not contrition, and will not supply its place. Real contrition must come from the grace of God, and must be a sorrow for having offended God and violated His commandments, for the love of God, or the fear of His punishments, or from a consideration of the baseness of sin by which we have offended Him. The fear of God generally goes before the love of God. If once we grieve for our sins, "because by them we have lost heaven and deserved hell," we are on the road to grieve for them also for the love of God, who is infinitely

good in Himself, and infinitely good to us, "because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

I have now to speak of another quality which must belong to contrition: it must be *universal*—that is, it must be a sorrow for *all* the sins by which we have offended God. It sometimes happens that people have a feeling of great regret for some sins, whilst they are quite indifferent to others. It may be that they are very sensitive to the disgrace which belongs to certain crimes —to some of those offences which this world views with special abhorrence—whilst, at the same time, they think very little of sins to which, perhaps, they are only too much accustomed. Sometimes, indeed, you find people who will not bring themselves to any kind of regret for some offences against the law of God, though they think they are really contrite for others. It is plain that this is not real contrition. If a man is really sorry for his sins *because they have offended God*, it is clear that he will repent of *everything* which has grievously offended Him—whether it is a thing which strikes his own imagination painfully or not. It is therefore necessary to include in our sorrow everything which has deprived us of God's grace.

There is one other condition which a true sorrow for sin must always possess—it must be the highest *kind* of sorrow. This does not mean that you must necessarily feel it as acutely as you do many natural sorrows—that, indeed, to most people is impossible; but it must be of a higher character than any other sorrow. If you love God at all, you must love Him above all things, in the sense that you prefer Him to all things. In the same way, if you regret and turn away from sin, it must be as the greatest of all evils, because it deprives you of the Supreme Good.

Contrition has two parts: it looks to the past with regret, and it looks to the future with purpose of amendment. A sorrow for sin which did not contain any purpose of keeping out of sin for the future is plainly a mockery; and this explains what is meant by saying that contrition must be the highest kind of sorrow. There are many things which you may bitterly and truly regret, even whilst you know that you must, and certainly would, do them again. You might, for instance, grieve very much for having given pain and offence to one of your friends, and yet you might feel that, under the same circumstances, you would have to do the same thing again. Such a feeling and intention as this, however, will not do for contrition. You must regret sin as a thing which *no* circumstance can ever make necessary or authorize, and you must intend, without any reserve, to avoid it for the future.

A firm purpose of amendment is "a resolution to avoid not only sin, but also the dangerous occasions of sin." This resolution is essential to contrition, and is practically the best test of the sincerity of your sorrow. People are very apt to deceive themselves as to their own feelings, because feeling depends very much upon the natural temperament and disposition of individuals. Some are very easily moved, perhaps even to tears. They hear a touching sermon, or they have meditated upon some affecting subject, and, for the moment, they are carried away by their emotions, although, perhaps, there is very little change of heart; and they have forgotten all their tender feelings by the time they have dried their tears. Others, again, are not so easily touched; their imaginations and feelings are slow to move, and they may easily fancy that they have not any real sorrow for sin because they have not the same acute sensations as their neighbours; whereas, in reality, they may be much better disposed.

Let us here say a word, my dear brethren, about those tender emotions and good feelings which God sometimes gives to us. It is a great blessing to have a heart easily touched by spiritual things—a heart which has not become hard or cold, and which does not confine its sensibilities to earthly affections. "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes?" says the Prophet Jeremias; and, in the same way, it ought to be our desire to weep as we should for our sins. Our Blessed Lord Himself, "in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications" (Heb. v. 7), did not disdain to be affected by these natural human feelings. They are a great grace from God, which we must encourage, and of which we never need be ashamed. On the other hand, emotions are not enough by themselves; they are meant to lead us on to acts, and if they do not succeed in moving us to doing something, they are of no value. Such emotions are therefore sometimes dangerous, because they delude people as to the state of their own hearts and wills, and they fancy their hearts are changed, whereas it is only their imaginations which are touched. Our Lord says, "By their fruits you shall know them," and the test of the value of emotion is the good it leads to.

A real purpose of amendment is not a thing which is so easily mistaken. If you have a real, hearty purpose to do better—to begin in earnest and amend your life—to keep out of sin and to serve God—then you may be sure that your contrition is a genuine change of heart, and not a mere passing feeling. But, then, a purpose of amendment doesn't mean merely *saying* that you are going to do better. It is a very easy thing to make a

purpose of amendment in mere words. "I firmly purpose, by the assistance of Thy grace, never more to offend Thee for the time to come, and carefully to avoid the occasions of sinning." We have all said these very solemn words times without number; but did they mean much, and has much come of them?

When people say, in a vague way, that they have a firm purpose to amend their lives, they often forget to ask themselves when they are going to begin, and how they mean to do it. Perhaps it is that they intend to lead much better lives *some time or other*—by-and-bye—but are not quite ready to begin at once; they do not think of making any great change just now. This sort of purpose of amendment is very much like the will-o'-the-wisp, which is said to delude travellers. They see a light in the distance, and they think they are getting nearer to it, whereas it always keeps the same distance ahead, and so, it may be, lures them to their destruction. In the same way, we may keep on purposing amendment till death surprises us, and the amendment itself may be just as far off as ever.

Again, your firm purpose of being good, sometimes means: "I will be good if I can do so without any trouble or self-denial." People are not prepared to count the cost, and resolutely to brace themselves to the exertion and self-sacrifice which are obviously necessary. Such a proposed amendment is obviously a delusion, since it is quite clear that we can never be good and do our duty without some sacrifice; and, if we do not mean the sacrifice, we do not really *mean* the amendment. "He who will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." If we do not at all intend to take up the cross, we certainly do not mean following our Lord.

A real purpose of amendment includes not only the *end*, but the means. You have no doubt about this in common life. A man means to go to a place—then he clearly means to take the road that leads there—he thinks of the distance, of the different paths he may take, of the modes of conveyance available for his purpose, and so forth. If he didn't do this, you would say he didn't mean it at all. In the same way, if a man wants a job of work done, he at once sets himself to consider the ways and means for getting it done: without this, you would say his meaning it was only talk, and went for nothing.

What is true of all worldly purposes applies to real purpose of amendment. You must not be content with saying, "I am going to be better," but you must add, "I am going to begin at once, and to take such and such steps of reform." You say, "I am grieved for this sin, and mean to avoid it." Yes, but in your heart you know that certain company is sure to lead to it; have

you made up your mind to keep out of this company, or do you mean to frequent it just as you did before? You are grieved that you have fallen into bad habits of sin, and mean to amend. Certainly, but have you thought how this habit can be checked, and made up your mind to adopt the course which you know will check it? A man has a custom of swearing and using bad language: if he took the trouble to set himself some little penance every time that he forgot himself, the habit would very soon be overcome. If, for example, he said a "Hail, Mary," or "Gloria Patri," whenever he was conscious that he had fallen into this bad habit, he would soon cease to use any such language. Do men mean such remedies as this? I do not ask, Do they always faithfully *use* the remedies, but do they ever really *mean* to use them? If not, can they really flatter themselves that their protestations of a firm purpose of amendment are of much use?

Once more: people say they are going to amend their lives, but they know very well that amendment of life, and keeping out of sin, means regularity in receiving the sacraments, and also reasonable diligence in prayer. Their faith teaches them that they cannot be good without using the appointed means of grace, and experience fully confirms this truth. So long as they are tolerably regular in their duties, and take reasonable pains about prayer, they keep on pretty well; but when they remain away from the sacraments, and neglect prayer, they soon fall into sin, Such being the case, it is clear that an intention to lead a better life *ought* to mean a resolution to go regularly to confession and Communion at certain intervals, and to give a certain portion of time every week, and every day, to prayer and the consideration of the presence of God. Very often, however, people do *not* mean this; they profess to mean amendment, but they do not contemplate coming to the Sacraments more frequently, or praying more. They want to get through the present confession decently well, and then tacitly mean to shelve the whole question until circumstances make it necessary to receive the sacraments again.

I do not mean, of course, that people say so to themselves, or are conscious that such is their intention, but I am afraid that if they cross-examined themselves honestly as to their real meaning they would find that their purpose of amendment was something like what I have described.

When a man has committed a very grievous sin, the guilt of which strikes his imagination, there is not much fear that he will not have a good purpose of amendment; the danger is when the sins into which we fall are mere ordinary and

commonplace transgressions. In cases of venial sin, for instance, there is great danger of confessing them without any real purpose of amendment. And, therefore, people very often find themselves confessing the same fault, year after year, with very little improvement. Does not this give us good reason for doubting the sincerity of the purposes of amendment they have been making?

The mere fact that we fall back again into sin does not prove that our promises were not sincere, because our nature is weak and changeable, and even our best resolutions easily break down; but still we have reason for disquiet if we see no sign of an effort, and can find nothing but words. In our worldly affairs, even if we do not carry out our purposes completely, there is generally *something* to show if we have been in earnest, and so it should be in spiritual things. If we have *not* been in earnest in our purposed amendment, have we not great reason to fear? What greater affront can we offer to Almighty God than professions which mean nothing, and solemn promises which are insincere? "They loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto Him" (Ps. lxxvii. 36). "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jer. xlviii. 10). What can be more deceitful than a series of promises which mean nothing and are never carried into effect? On the other hand, a real purpose of amendment is not only the best sign of contrition, but is the most effective instrument for a change of life. However weak you may be, if you will only go on, always meaning to be good, and intending honestly to fight against temptation, you will certainly be victorious in the long run—and, by God's grace, good intention will receive the crown, in spite of human frailty.

I must conclude by once more dwelling on the importance of a very sincere and earnest contrition. It is not only the essential preparation for the pardon of sin, but it makes all things easy, and makes grace abundant. Those who are really humbled before God, and heartily sorry for having offended Him, find no difficulties. It is easy for them to confess their sins, and make atonement for them, and reproach before men is but a small thing in their eyes. The conditions for pardon which our Lord has appointed seem to them but too easy and gracious, because they really feel what sin is. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The Lord cannot resist the pleadings of a heart full of humility and contrition, and He pours out His graces abundantly upon those who come to Him with true and heartfelt sorrow: the greater the sorrow the more abundant will be the graces which His sacraments will confer.

We have all abundant reasons for sorrow. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I. St. John i. 8). If your conscience does not recall any grievous offence since your last confession, you have only to look back on your past lives: "I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Isaias xxxviii. 15). "Be not without fear for sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin" (Ecclus. v. 5). It may be that we have already grieved for our past offences, and hope that they have been forgiven, but we cannot too often renew our sorrow for them. Sorrow for the past is the best preservative for the future

Whence, my dear brethren, shall we get this most excellent sorrow? "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes?" We shall strive for it in vain by our own exertions: it must be the gift of God Himself. We must ask Him to do for us what He promised to the Jews: "I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you: I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh (Ezech. xxxvi. 26). "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels" (Ps. l. 12).

SERMON LXXIII.

Satisfaction.

"Therefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes" (Job. xlii. 6).

THESE words, my dear brethren, put before us another essential part of the sacrament of Penance. It is not enough for us to be our own accusers by confession; we must also be ready to execute justice on ourselves by making satisfaction. The Catechism tells us that "Satisfaction is doing the penance given us by the priest." A "penance" means a punishment of some sort, which the priest, in his capacity of judge, awards to us as a satisfaction to the justice of Almighty God, which is offended by sin. It is absolutely necessary, in order to receive pardon, that the penitent should be ready to accept, and have the will to perform, this penance. A disposition to make amends goes naturally with sorrow for sin. We cannot, therefore, fancy any one really contrite who is not willing to do something in the way of satisfaction. According to the present discipline of the Church, the penance is generally some short prayer, imposed rather as a sign of willingness to accept punishment, than as being any real punishment in itself.

The very first idea of all religion is that of responsibility: that we, as God's creatures, are responsible to our Creator for all our deeds, and are to look to Him for reward or punishment, according as they are good or bad. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). "I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever for the reward" (Ps. cxviii. 112). The solemn warning which man received from the very time of his creation is given to us in these words of Almighty God to Cain when he was tempted to his crime: "Why art thou angry, and why has thy countenance fallen? If thou do well, shalt thou not receive?—but if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv. 6). Present at the door! If we could only think of the consequences of our sins as waiting for us, following our footsteps, always close to us, and not to be put off until in some way or other they are fully satisfied, we should commit very few sins.

Almost the first idea we have of Almighty God is that of the

just Judge who will allow nothing to pass unrewarded or unpunished: "The Most High is a patient rewarder" (Ecclus v. 4). We find this truth put before us in almost every page of the Holy Scripture. "He that seeth into the heart, He understandeth, and nothing deceiveth the Keeper of thy soul, and He shall render to a man according to his works" (Prov. xxiv. 12); again, in the Psalms we find: "God hath spoken once, these two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to Thee, O Lord, for Thou will render to every man according to his works" (Ps. lxi. 12). "For mercy and wrath are with Him. He is mighty to forgive and to pour out indignation; according as His mercy is, so His correction judgeth a man according to his works. The sinner shall not escape in his rapines, and the patience of Him that showeth mercy shall not be put off" (Ecclus. xvi. 12).

In the New Testament we have the same fundamental truth constantly before us: "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. ii. 5). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7). "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). The New Testament almost concludes with the same truth in our Lord's own words: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works" (Apoc. xxii. 12).

It is very good for us, my dear brethren, to dwell frequently upon these solemn warnings, that we may not lose sight of our responsibilities. Our natural inclination is to put our sins out of sight as soon as possible, and to deceive us ourselves by fancying that, because we have forgotten them, we shall no longer be held accountable for them. The Lord is a "patient rewarder," and all the evil we do has to be accounted for in some way. It has become a debt which we owe to His justice, and, in some way or other, it must be satisfied. Our Lord Himself is constantly comparing sin to a debt which we owe to God: "One was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents" (St. Matt. xviii. 24). "A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty" (St. Luke vii. 41)—and in His own prayer He teaches us to say: "Forgive us our *debts*, as we also forgive our debtors."

If men would only look upon their sins as debts which they

would certainly have to pay, some day or other, they would not be so careless in contracting them. Every sin, great or small, that men commit increases the reckoning that is against them. "Are not these things stored up with me, and sealed up in my treasures? Revenge is mine, and I will repay them in due time, that their foot may slide; the day of destruction is at hand, and the time makes haste to come" (Deut. xxxii. 34).

We see, moreover, that Almighty God regards sin as a debt to His justice, to be satisfied in some way or other, not only when the sinners are His enemies, but also when they are His friends. Moses and David were both very high in the favour of God, and specially privileged; they were both men "according to God's own heart." When they sinned, however, Almighty God acted by them as by all others, and, in spite of the high favour in which they stood, they had to pay the penalty of their transgression. "And when Moses had lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with the rod, there came forth water in great abundance, so that the people and their cattle drank. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Because you have not believed Me, to sanctify Me before the children of Israel, you shall not bring these people into the land which I will give them" (Num. xx. 11). Although Moses lived and died in the friendship of God, yet his transgression and unbelief were punished, and he was deprived of his greatest earthly reward—the honour of leading God's people into the promised land.

Almighty God acted in the same way by King David when he had sinned by his vanity in numbering his people. "David said to the Lord, I have sinned very much in what I have done, but I pray Thee, O Lord, to take away the iniquity of Thy servant, because I have done exceeding foolishly. And David arose in the morning, and the word of the Lord came to Gad the prophet and the seer of David, saying, Go and say to David. Then saith the Lord, I give thee thy choice of three things—choose one of them, which thou wilt that I may do it to thee. Either seven years of famine shall come to thee in thy land, or thou shalt flee before thine adversaries, or for three days there shall be a pestilence in thy land" (II. Kings xxiv. 10).

In these instances, and a thousand others, are exemplified the great truth that God is not a "respecter of persons." "Thou dost not regard the person of man." In all men alike does God hate sin—whether in the elect or in the reprobate, in saint or in sinner. He cannot endure iniquity, and will most certainly punish it. It does not matter how high may be the position in which the sinner is placed, or how necessary he may appear to be in the eyes of men; God will not endure iniquity or allow it to remain unpunished.

There is nothing which puts so vividly before us the necessity of satisfying the justice of God, which is offended by sin, as the great mystery of our redemption. Rather than allow the claims of His justice to remain unsatisfied, Almighty God, in His infinite wisdom, was pleased Himself to supply that satisfaction which His creatures could not give, and, to accomplish this, He took upon Himself our human nature, and died upon the cross for us. He might, if He had so willed, simply have cancelled the debt, but, instead of doing so, He worked this great miracle of love in order to enable us to pay it. We cannot, then, wonder that in all His dealings with His creatures He should insist upon due satisfaction being made in some way or other.

He has taken upon Himself that part of the debt which man was unable to pay. He has blotted out "the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us, and He has taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Colos. ii. 14).

He has, moreover, given us the power to make payment for ourselves by giving to all our actions a value derived from His own sacred merits. All that men could do of their unassisted power would be insufficient to make any satisfaction, but He has given a supernatural efficacy to what we do in Him and with Him, so that we are able, by His grace, to make a real and true satisfaction for the sins by which His justice has been outraged.

Our Lord, therefore, expects us to co-operate with Him, and to make use of the means of atonement which He has put into our hands. If He is to bear His cross, He expects us also to take up the cross and follow Him. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (St. Matt. xvi. 24). Why should men take up the cross?—why should they share in His suffering? Not because He delights in our suffering, not because what He has done is not sufficient to atone for sin, but because justice requires that men should, themselves, do something to pay that great debt which is due to the justice of Almighty God. Therefore it is that St. Paul says: "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). He does not mean that the sufferings of Christ were insufficient in themselves, but that what was wanting was the co-operation of men—that men should take up their cross and follow our Lord in making atonement for sin.

When sin is remitted, a debt of punishment may still remain, which we ourselves have still to pay. Our Lord has done His

part, and we must do ours. The Council of Trent declares that "it is wholly false, and foreign from the word of God, that the guilt of sin is *never* remitted by God without the whole punishment being also pardoned . . . . and truly the nature of divine justice seems to demand that they who, through ignorance, have sinned before Baptism, should be received into favour in a different manner from those who, having been once freed from the servitude of sin and the devil, and having received the gift of the Holy Ghost, have not feared knowingly to violate the temple of God, and to grieve the Holy Spirit. . . . . But the satisfaction which we make for our sins is not so ours, that it be not through Jesus Christ; for we, who can do nothing of ourselves, as of ourselves, can do all things, He co-operating who strengthens us" (Sess. 14, ch. vii.).

If we turn once more to the history of King David, we have the plainest possible example of the satisfaction which is required by the justice of God, even when the sin has been distinctly forgiven. He had committed a great crime in contriving the death of Urias, and a prophet was sent to reprove him, and "David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, The Lord also hath taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (II. Kings xii. 13). God had forgiven him his sin, and yet He punished him by the immediate loss of the child he loved, and afterwards by the rebellion and crimes of his own son.

We find the same throughout the whole of the Jewish Law; whenever sin was remitted some sacrifice was always required as an "offering for sin." In this way our Lord's Great Sacrifice—the only true means of forgiveness—was represented, and something was done by the sinner to join in that reparation. St. Paul, therefore, says, "And without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrew ix. 22).

By every sin, then, which men commit they incur a debt to the justice of God. The guilt of sin cannot be pardoned without a true contrition and change of heart; and, even when the guilt has been remitted, a satisfaction is due to the injured Majesty of God, which must be paid in one way or another. We will now, therefore, consider the different ways in which satisfaction may be made.

The satisfaction, which justice naturally requires, is the punishment of the offender, either in this life or in the life to come; but the mercy of God has provided many other ways in which we may make atonement. In the first place, God is

mercifully satisfied by an atonement offered for us. Nothing that man could suffer or do would be a sufficient reparation; no sacrifice that he could offer would avail; therefore the Almighty has Himself offered a sacrifice for us, and His justice accepts the reparation as if it were ours. "Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come" (Ps. xxxix. 7). In the same way, Almighty God allows us to offer up satisfaction for our brethren, and, to some extent, at any rate, accepts it as if from them. We have seen, for instance, how St. Paul "rejoiced in his sufferings to fill up those things that were wanting for the Church"—that is, for his brethren.

We have abundant instances in the Old Law of the same thing—that is, that Almighty God was pleased to receive the prayers and offerings of His faithful servants as a satisfaction for sinners. When the children of Israel had grievously offended, and God sent fire to destroy them, we read that Aaron put incense into his censer, and, running to the midst of the multitude which the burning fire was now destroying, "he offered the incense; and, standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plague ceased" (Num. xvi. 47). As it said in the Psalm: "And He said that He would destroy them; had not Moses, His chosen one, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath lest He should destroy them" (Ps. cv. 23). So, in the New Law, our Lord will receive our prayers for our brethren, and the sacrifices we make on their behalf, in some part, at any rate, as a satisfaction for the debt which they owe to His justice

There are, besides, many kinds of good works which God will allow to supply the place of the punishment due to our sins. To begin with, our Lord dwells strongly on the efficacy of prayer. We owe a great debt to God, and we can obtain the forgiveness of the debt by earnest prayer. "And that servant, falling down, besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all: and the lord of the servant, being moved with pity, let him go, and forgave him the debt. . . . . Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me" (St. Matt. xviii. 26–32).

Prayer first puts us in dispositions in which we may obtain the remission of guilt, and be restored to the favour of God, and then it is able, in a great measure, to pay the debt which our sins have left owing. "By prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God."

However great may be the debt that we owe, our Lord will allow us to pay it by fervent prayer.

Again: Almighty God constantly refers us to almsgiving as a most powerful means of paying our own debts. What can be

stronger than the words of the Archangel Raphael, which are recorded in the history of Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold; for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting. . . . . When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered Thy prayer to the Lord" (Tob. xii. 8). In the same spirit is the advice given by the Prophet Daniel: "Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and redeem thou thy sins with alms and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor: perhaps He will forgive thy offences" (Dan. iv. 24).

The same is the teaching of our Lord in the New Testament. Our Lord accepts even the smallest thing done in His name to one of our brethren as something done immediately for Him, and consequently of great value: "Whosoever shall give to drink, to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (St. Matt. x. 42). He continues the lesson that had been given by His servants before, that "alms purge away sin and maketh to find mercy;" "But yet that which remaineth, give alms; and behold, all things are clean unto you" (St. Luke xi. 41). And St. Peter sums up the lesson in the beautiful words which are so familiar to us: "Before all things, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covereth a multitude of sins" (I. St. Peter iv. 8).

The best of all ways, however, in which men may pay the debt which they owe on account of their sin, is by ardent love of God. Charity not only obtains for us the forgiveness of sin, but also satisfies the claims of justice. "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (St. Luke vii. 47). The martyrs who have laid down their lives for God, paid at once the whole debt due for former transgressions, because the act of martyrdom is the highest act of love which man can perform. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (St. John xv. 13). In the same way the supreme act of faith and charity which caused the penitent thief to make his confession on the cross, obtained for him a full and complete pardon for all past offences, so that our Lord made to him the gracious promise: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Charity is like a furnace which, when it is thoroughly heated, consumes everything: it is incompatible with the guilt of sin, and destroys it, and when grace is restored to the soul an ardent charity has power to pay all the debts that may still be due.

Besides all these different ways in which men may pay their debt to God, our Lord has left authority to His Church to assist them in their endeavours. He gave to His Apostles the most unrestricted power of forgiving, not only sin, but the punishment of sin. "What you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 18). His Church was to represent on earth both His justice and His mercy, and therefore had two offices to perform. One of these was to punish the sinner in God's name, by requiring at least so much satisfaction for the sins committed as should be salutary for the sinner and edifying for the community. The other was to facilitate the payment of the debt which remained due by sinners—to make terms, if we may say so, on which sinners might be released from their liabilities in the speediest and easiest way possible.

In the early Church it was considered desirable to insist upon a very severe penitential discipline. It was not enough for sinners simply to repent of their sins and ask pardon—they had to undergo long penances and great austerities before they could be reinstated in their privileges as Christians. The writings of the Fathers of the Church in the early ages tell us how severe was the satisfaction asked of sinners.

"Dost thou therefore think," says a writer of the first century, "that their offences, who do penitence, are immediately blotted out? No, they are not presently; but it is necessary that he who does penitence afflict his soul, and show himself humble in spirit in all his affairs, and undergo many and divers vexations; and, when he shall have suffered all things which were appointed for him, then, perhaps, He that made him and formed all things will be moved with compassion towards him, and afford him some remedy" (Hermas, "Faith of Catholics," vol. iii. p. 117). I will quote a passage from St. Cyprian, which may be taken as an illustration of the penitential practices of his time. He says: "As we have sinned greatly, let us weep greatly. To a deep wound let not a diligent and long course of medicine be wanting. Let not the penitence be less than the crime. Thinkest thou that the Lord can be quickly appeased when thou hast, with perfidious words, denied Him? . . . . Men must pray and entreat more earnestly, pass the day in grief, spend nights in vigils and tears, employ their whole time in sorrowing lamentations, lie stretched on the ground, prostrate themselves amongst ashes, sackcloth, and dust: after Christ's raiment lost, wish for no other clothing; after the devil's food, of choice must fast; apply themselves to just works, whereby sins are purged away; give abundant alms, whereby souls are freed from death. . . . . God can show indulgence; He can turn aside His sentence. To

the man who is penitent, who does good works, who entreats, He can graciously give pardon. He can impute whatever, for such, martyrs may pray and priests perform" (St. Cyprian, "Faith of Catholics," vol. iii. p. 121).

Those who had committed great crime, were obliged to submit to severe public penance; and were not allowed to enter the church till they had done the penance assigned to them. We have a striking example of this in the life of St. Ambrose, who was Archbishop of Milan in the fourth century. The Emperor Theodosius had committed a great crime by ordering a massacre at Thessalonica, in punishment of a sedition that had taken place there. Great cruelty was shown by the soldiers, and many innocent people were put to death. Theodosius was at that time the greatest and most powerful monarch on earth, and yet, when he presented himself at the church, St. Ambrose went out to meet him and forbade him to enter. "It seems, sir," he said, "that you do not rightly apprehend the enormity of the massacre lately committed. Let not the splendour of your purple robes hinder you from being acquainted with the infirmities of that body which they cover. You are of the same mould with those subjects whom you govern. Depart, therefore, and attempt not, by a second offence, to aggravate your former crime; but quietly take the yoke upon you which the Lord hath appointed for you. It is sharp, but it is medicinal and conducive to your health." The Prince, by way of extenuation, said that David had sinned, to which St. Ambrose answered: "You have followed him in his crime, follow him also in his repentance." Theodosius submitted and accepted the penance which the Church prescribed. He retired to his palace and spent eight months in mourning, clad in penitential garments. (Butler's "Lives of the Saints").

The object of the penance imposed in confession is to remind us of the debt which we owe, and to make us, as it were, acknowledge the liability. It is not for a moment supposed that such a slight punishment is sufficient to satisfy the justice of God; and the Church is constantly exhorting us to pay the debt which we owe by works of penance; by patience under the trials which Providence sends us; by prayer and almsdeeds, and, above all, by love and devotion. The days of fasting and abstinence which are commanded have the same object in view, that we may satisfy God for our sins.

In order to help us to discharge our debt, the Church makes use of her power of loosing from the effects of sin by granting indulgences. These indulgences are a remission of the whole or part of the temporal punishment due to sins, which is granted in

consideration of some good work which we do in order to satisfy the justice of God. Indulgences are granted at certain seasons, and in honour of certain feasts, and are besides given to those who perform certain acts of piety. To gain them the first thing necessary is to be truly penitent, so that the guilt of the sin shall have first been pardoned. For this reason a good confession and Communion are almost always part of the condition of an indulgence.

And if we do not pay this debt? If we neglect all the means which God has provided for us? "The night cometh when no man can work," and God will reserve the punishment for that prison of purgatory, in which He acts, not as now, in the character of a loving Saviour and Advocate, but as a severe and inexorable Judge. The holy souls in purgatory, who are now slowly paying the debt due on account of their sins, could tell us how fearful a thing is the justice of God even on those He loves. "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (St. Matt. v. 25).

SERMON LXXIV.

Confession in Practice.

"I have thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimony" (Ps. cxviii. 59).

THE preparation for confession involves "entering into oneself"—that is, thinking upon our past ways, in order to turn our feet to God's Commandments. As I said before, the first step of the prodigal son in his return to his father, was to "return to himself" and think. Such consideration is needed, my brethren, that we may know our own sins and the real state of our consciences before God. St. Paul says: "For what man knoweth the things of man but the spirit of a man that is in him" (I. Cor. ii. 11) But the things that are within us are known even to our own spirit only by reflection, and there are many who live strangers to themselves and their own consciences. We need thought, moreover, that we may find out the path of improvement, and see what is needful in the way of perfection, that "I may know what is wanting to me" (Ps. xxxviii. 5); and still more that we may learn to grieve, as we should, over the offences we have committed. "My sorrow was renewed, my heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out" (Ps. xxxviii. 3).

I propose to-day to speak a little more practically about confession, and especially about the preparation for it. The good fruit to be derived from the sacrament of Penance depends so much on the dispositions with which men receive it that we can hardly dwell too much on the importance of a careful preparation. Let us first, however, consider the necessity of *frequent* confession. To make the sacrament of Penance answer its purpose it is not enough to receive it well, but you must receive it frequently—that is, sufficiently often for your spiritual necessities. The very idea of a remedy is that it should be used when it is wanted, and if it is not applied when the necessity arises it is of very little value.

There are a great many people who go to confession as a matter of routine at certain long intervals, but who do not seem to think much of using the sacrament as a remedy which God has given to them as a means to a distinct end. It is impossible to lay down any fixed rule as to the frequency of confession,

because, obviously, all men have not the same need of it. Let each one decide honestly what his own spiritual state requires, and what will be good for him, and act upon that decision. People should, however, take care not to raise up unnecessary difficulties for themselves; it is, for instance, a foolish thing to choose a confessor who lives at such a distance as to make confession a laborious and difficult undertaking. Every one should accustom himself to go to the priest who happens to be within reach, if necessary, so that he may be able to get the spiritual assistance he needs without unreasonable difficulty. It is also a mistake to give too much time and labour to the preparation for confession. It is, of course, impossible to make too careful a preparation; but it is very possible to have an exaggerated idea of the time and labour necessary, and so to put unnecessary difficulties in the way of receiving the sacraments. You find people, for instance, who think themselves obliged to give a certain fixed time to preparation; to read through certain formal examinations and devotions, and, if they cannot find time for all their self-imposed formula, they will stay away from the sacraments. There are quite difficulties enough, and people should take care not to put obstacles of their own making in the way of receiving the sacraments.

The first part of a preparation is a good intention. Our Lord says: "The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome" (St. Matt. vi. 22). Now, the *eye* of a man's acts is the intention with which he does them; by his intention he looks forward to some end, and the good or evil of this end colours all that he does, and makes his act light or darkness. However excellent, and even heroic, human actions may appear to be, and may be in themselves, if they proceed from evil motives, they are simply evil, whilst the smallest thing that is done with a good intention is a good work.

To make a perfect work, however, it is not enough that it should proceed from a good intention; it must come, as far as possible, from a pure and unmixed intention, and also from an energetic intention. A great many things are done with an intention, which is good enough as far as it goes, but are done carelessly, and without any very strong purpose; we cannot expect such actions to have any great merit in the sight of God, since He looks principally to the intention.

Apply these principles to the preparation for confession. Try to have a very pure and energetic intention in what you are doing. A great many people prepare themselves for the sacraments, without stopping to ask themselves what is the object they propose to themselves—*why* they are going to confession—

and they would, perhaps, be surprised to find how much human respect, or mere routine, was influencing them. The real object they ought to have before them, by which alone they should wish to be influenced, is two-fold. In the first place, to make peace with God, "to flee from the wrath to come;" and, secondly, for the future, to obtain the grace of an amendment of their lives.

The sacrament of Penance has a double character: it is to be a shield and a sword. It is a shield with which to shelter ourselves from the anger of God our sins have deserved; and, at the same time, a sword, enabling us to strike down our spiritual enemies, by overcoming evil habits, and by uprooting the interior dispositions likely to lead us into sin. Even if we are not conscious of any very grievous offences, we should still make use of the sacrament in order to strike the enemy again and again. We read, for instance of the assiduity with which great saints made use of sacramental confession—not, as we may naturally suppose, because they had committed many sins, but because they were determined completely to subdue the enemy.

There is a story in the Old Testament which we may take as an illustration of the frequent use of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. King Joas went to visit the prophet Eliseus, who was then sick of the illness of which he died. The prophet told him to bring a bow and arrows, and "he said to the King of Israel, 'Put thy hand upon the bow.' And when he had put his hand, Eliseus put his hands over the King's hands, and said, 'Open the window to the east.' And when he had opened it, Eliseus said, 'Shoot an arrow.' And he shot. And Eliseus said, 'The arrow of the Lord's deliverance from Syria.' . . . . And he said, 'Strike with an arrow upon the ground.' And he struck three times, and stood still. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, 'If thou hadst smitten five or six or seven times, thou hadst smitten Syria even to utter destruction; but now three times shalt thou smite it'" (IV. Kings xiii. 16). So Christians use the sacraments and stand still; whereas, if they struck again and again, as the saints did, they would gain a complete victory over their spiritual enemies.

But it is not quite enough to have a right intention; we should endeavour also to have a very earnest and energetic intention, or, as we may say, to be very full of what we mean, and are going to do. A great many people have really excellent intentions if they were cross-questioned as to the objects they were aiming at, and had time to consider what their intentions were; but this is not quite enough. Let us see what was the sort of intention which brought the sick and the lepers to our Lord when they

came to be healed. "Behold a man full of leprosy, who, seeing Jesus, and falling on his face, besought him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean" (St. Luke v. 12); or, again, the two blind men who followed Him, "crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, O Son of David" (St. Matt. ix. 27). What sort of intention had these suppliants?

They and all the others who came to our Lord for temporal favours knew thoroughly well what they meant and wanted, and wanted it with all their hearts. It is just this sort of straightforward and energetic intention that we should take with us when we set to work to prepare for confession.

We must not, however, rely too much on our own good intentions, but we must begin by asking God's help, or, as the Catechism tells us, "we must heartily pray for grace to make a good confession;" for, as St. Paul says: "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will" (Phil. ii. 13). Our good intentions, therefore, must be perfected by earnest prayer, and strengthened by the grace of God, or they will prove insufficient. Our prayer ought to be for two things—for light to see and strength to act. Without divine light, we cannot hope to get any adequate view of our own consciences. How should we? We are surrounded on all sides by false lights and false ideas, and are constantly liable to be misled by the prejudice of men and the suggestions of self-love; we want to put all these things aside, in order to judge fairly of our own conduct, and to do so we need the light of God's grace.

It is not enough to have light to see our own faults; we require also strength of will and determination to turn away from evil; and this earnest will we cannot expect unless God touches our hearts by His grace. Earnest prayer, therefore, is one of the great elements in a good confession—indeed, as I have before said, fervent prayer is, as a rule, necessary for receiving all the sacraments with profit.

I now come to the examination of conscience. On this all your preparation rests; it is the foundation on which your sorrow and purpose of amendment depend. You cannot have sorrow or purpose of amendment, except in a general and vague way, unless you know pretty accurately what you are going to be sorry for. It is necessary, then, to make a good examination of conscience, because it is a serious work to be done for God; for this reason you are bound to do it well, and also because, as I have said, the reality of your sorrow and good resolutions depend a good deal on the accuracy of your self-knowledge. It is not, however, necessary, as a general rule, to give any

very long time to it; and those who are over-scrupulous in the part of their preparation very often allow it to interfere with what is still more important—that is, with their sorrow and purpose of amendment—or make it an excuse for keeping away from confession.

Conscience is that light which God has placed within us, to guide us and to reprove us. It tells you what it is your duty to do when you are called upon to act, and you can never lawfully go against it; it tells you also when you have sinned. You do not need to ask anyone else, because your conscience is your own special judge, and you are "a law to yourselves." Conscience is to us like the angel of God, of whom the Lord said to the Jews: "Behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned, for he will not let thee go when thou hast sinned" (Exod. xxiii. 20).

We have, then, to attend to the warnings of our own conscience, and also to listen to its reproaches afterwards. It will be an evil day for us if ever we silence those reproaches by perverting our own conscience. "Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (St. Luke xi. 35). Conscience now too often utters its reproaches in a faint and timid way; but the day will come when it will be an unsparing accuser —when, as St. Paul tells us, men will "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending, one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel" (Rom. ii. 15). If we thought of the witness which our consciences will have to give against us in that terrible day we should be a little more diligent and honest in asking what they have to say against us now.

"I have thought over my ways." The life of man is a varied and complicated scene: he has many paths to travel, and he has to make them all straight; he has many and various duties to do, and he must fail in none of them, and it is by doing them all that he is to "keep the Commandments." The shortest and simplest way of examining your conscience is by considering what your duties are, and how you do them. What do you owe to God, and how do you pay it?—that is plainly the first question.

Without the spirit of obedience every other service is a mockery. "Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed, for

obedience is better than sacrifice" (I. Kings xv. 22). We have, then, first to ask ourselves whether our lives are a habitual obedience to God, as far as we know His will. Do we make it our principle in everything to say with the Apostles: "We ought to obey God rather than man?" The ordinary way in which this obedience is shown is by carefully observing the laws made by the Church for God's service. These are, ordinarily speaking, the test of obedience; they are things which sometimes seem small in themselves, but have great importance, because they show, more than almost anything else, whether we will or not bend our own wills to the commands of God. There are, sometimes, great occasions on which we are called upon to show our obedience to God; but, in common life, obedience is generally shown by strictness in making your Easter Communion, by regularity in hearing Mass on Sundays, by fasting and abstaining on the appointed days, and by other things of the same kind.

Next to obedience comes service. You owe to God reasonable service. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). Let us consider what service we habitually offer to God: is it a reasonable service? Is it reasonable in the amount of our time which we habitually offer? Do we give thought enough and trouble enough to allow us to call it a reasonable service? Take the week through—take the day through, and ask yourself whether you are really giving your reasonable service.

Next to obedience and service comes reverence; or, rather, reverence must be united to obedience and service to make them worthy of the name. So necessary is the spirit of reverence that Almighty God has, as we know, made it the subject of a distinct Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." We must take care, therefore, to ask ourselves whether we are reverent, not merely in actually using the name of God, but in all the thousand ways in which reverence is shown—in thought, in speech, in behaviour; whether we are reverent in prayer, reverent in church, respectful to authority, and careful about all those things which belong to God's service. All Christians ought to be much on their guard against the spirit of irreverence, and to try to detect it under all the many disguises which it sometimes assumes, for this spirit very easily destroys all religious feeling. "Deliver me not up to an irreverent and foolish mind" (Ecclus. xxiii. 6) is a prayer which we have most of us an occasion to make.

Besides all this, we have to ask ourselves whether we are really

trying to love God, since without love nothing else has any value. "Son, give Me thy heart." Our Lord Himself tells us that the "greatest and first commandment" is "to love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (St. Matt. xxii. 37); and St. Paul adds: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 3). When we examine our consciences we may well ask ourselves a few searching questions on this point: Do we really love God, and try to give Him our hearts? What is there in our lives which looks like it? May we not sometimes find a course of behaviour which has an appearance of systematic coldness and indifference? You find people, for instance, who seem overflowing with kindliness and generosity, and almost enthusiasm, for everything else except Almighty God; but, when it is a question of His service, they at once become cold and niggardly. Such a tone as this looks very little like love, and yet, perhaps, the consciences of many people do not reproach them much with the ungenerous, unloving tone of their whole lives.

I have spoken of our general duties to God at such length, because I think people sometimes fail in their self-examination by not taking a sufficiently broad view of themselves and their conduct; they see the little things, but sometimes great and serious faults, which colour their whole lives, escape notice. In practice, however, it is very easy to see whether you are really serving God, or deserve the curse which the prophet utters in the words: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord fraudulently" (Jer. xlviii. 10). A very few practical questions will settle this. How often, and in what manner, do you receive the sacraments? How do you sanctify the Sunday? How do you say your daily prayers? How do you speak of God and holy things? How do you keep the commandments of the Church? The answers to these questions will tell you plainly enough how you are serving God.

Other duties to God, however, take up but a very small part of our lives. In one sense, of course, the whole of our lives belong to the service of God; everything we do ought ultimately to be directed to God and to be done for His service, and because it is His will, so that, to use our Blessed Lord's words, we may always "be about our Father's business." It is clear, however, that very much the larger part of our time is occupied in work which does not *directly* concern the service of God; we have to serve Him by doing the duty we owe to our neighbours. An examination of conscience must, therefore, go carefully into

our dealings with our fellow-men in all the different ways in which we come in contact with them.

Our neighbours hold a number of different positions towards us, each of which brings with it its own duties and difficulties. We must, therefore, see how we conduct ourselves in each position. Our neighbours are either our equals or our inferiors, or they are the people whom God has placed over us. "A certain lawyer, willing to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" (St. Luke x. 29). In the same way, we are occasionally inclined to justify ourselves by excluding portions of our fellow-creatures from our charity, as if they were not our neighbours. People are often kind enough to their equals, and, at the same time, forget that they owe any charity to those below them, or, perhaps—and I am not sure that it is not the more common case—they cannot bring themselves to remember that those who have authority over them are their neighbours and brethren as well as their superiors. Sometimes, of course, it is the other way, and there are many who can be kind and good to all except their equals.

We must not be contented unless we are doing what is right by *all*, and therefore ought to make all the different relations of life subjects of self-examination. What we owe to all men, without exception, is justice and charity. Our duties to our neighbours are well summed up in St. Paul's words: "Render, therefore, to all men their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. xiii. 7).

Justice includes many things. Justice in money matters; or in those things which are equivalent to money, such as time, care, diligence. It also includes attention to the rights of others —both to the special rights of individuals, and to the general rights which all men possess. Under the first come the rights of employers, masters, customers, of the people with whom we have made contracts, or are associated in business, and of all who have any special claim on us. The second division takes in those duties which we owe to the community in which we live, and the right which all men have to expect assistance in need, sympathy, and, at any rate, fair dealing and truthfulness from all their brethren To this we must add the right which men have to their character and good name—the right not to be spoken of injuriously or unkindly by any one. These rights belong to strict justice, and we may well class the violation of some of them with injustice in money matters.

Duties to our neighbours require, however, something more

than mere justice—they need charity also. We cannot do them as we ought unless we have something, at any rate, of that charity which comes from the love of God, of which St. Paul says: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up . . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I. Cor. xiii. 4). It is not enough for us to be able to say that we are just to our neighbours unless we can also say that we, at least, try to be kind to them. "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy; and mercy exalteth itself above judgment" (St. James ii. 13). We have, then, to consider what mercy—what real charity and kindness we show to others, since we shall certainly need mercy ourselves.

In thinking of duties to others, we have not to consider the question in general, but it is for each one to consider who are the neighbours with whom he comes in contact, and how he does his duties to them.

There is still left one important field for self-examination, and that is the consideration of those interior sins which do not immediately affect any one but ourselves. "From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord." Our Lord says: "I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts" (Apoc. ii. 23); and He warns us specially not to become like whited sepulchres: "Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness" (St. Matt. xxiii. 27). We should, indeed, be "whited sepulchres" if we examined into, and corrected, external faults only, and paid no attention to the secret sins of spiritual pride, of malice, and of impurity. "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels" (Ps. l. 12). All exterior excellence will be of no avail before God, without purity of heart; and, therefore, our first care should be to watch over our own thoughts and imaginations, that our hearts may not be turned away to evil.

You have all many paths to tread, and you have in each of them to "make straight steps with your feet, that no one halting may go out of the way" (Heb. xii. 13). The Emperor's confessor, it is related, once said to him: "Thou hast confessed the sins of Charles; tell me now those of the Emperor." In the same way it is not enough for you to find out and confess the sins of the man. You must also confess the sins and shortcomings of the husband and of the father, of the lawyer and the tradesman, of the master and of the servant, if you would do your work thoroughly.

I have treated the subject of self-examination at some length,

even at the risk of repeating a good deal, and, therefore, I must put off, till another time, the most important part of preparation for confession—that is, the sorrow and good intentions which we are to have. I have said so much, because it is important for us all to take a fair and complete view of our duties and obligations, as the best means of discovering the sins we ought to confess. Such an examination need not take long. A very brief consideration of the chief duties you owe to God and to your neighbour, and to the custody of your own body and soul, will bring to your mind the sins of which you have been guilty.

I must conclude by exhorting you to remember that you are preparing an account for an all-seeing Lord, who will one day be your Judge. Forget that you have to make your acknowledgment to man, whose judgment of you is a small matter, and think only of laying your offences fully, honestly, and with humility of heart at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may take up your burden, and may wash away your stains with His Precious Blood.

SERMON LXXV.

Grieving for Sin.

"Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes?" (Jer. ix. 1).

How, my dear brethren, are we to get that sorrow for sin which is so essential? Without sorrow, nothing that we can do will be of any use whatever. I have dwelt on the importance of self-knowledge; but self-knowledge without repentance and amendment is worse than useless. The only object of knowing your sins is to turn away from them for the future. "I have thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" (Ps. cxviii. 59). If we are to think on our ways to any advantage, it must be with a real desire to turn our feet towards God's Commandments. Without a desire for improvement, self-examination is generally only a morbid and scrupulous self-tormenting, or else self-complacency. It is unhealthy, as well as useless, to dwell upon past actions and thoughts, unless when there is some distinct object in doing so; hence it is a great folly to make examination of conscience an *end* in your preparation of conscience, whereas it ought only to be the means to an end. People who are preparing themselves for Confession often spend a great part of their time in reading over examinations of conscience, and in thinking over their past actions. This is very often merely a form of idleness and dissipation of mind. Self-examination is good and useful only in so far as it is necessary for an accurate confession and for obtaining the proper dispositions.

The most important thing you have to do, when you prepare for confession, is to fill your mind with the dispositions of heart and of will, necessary for obtaining pardon for past sins, and grace for future improvement. These dispositions are hearty contrition and a firm purpose of amendment. But now comes the difficulty. How are we to be sorry for our sins? You often hear people complain that their hearts are cold—that they have no control over their feelings—that they cannot be sorry, and so forth. Can you be sorry for your sins if you will? Can you obtain their sincere and heartfelt contrition if you like? Yes, my dear brethren, you can. It is your own fault if you do not grieve for your sins as you ought to do. Of course, it is true

that you cannot have real contrition except by God's grace; but, then, God will certainly grant you His grace if you do your part. Contrition must come from God. "From above He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath chastised me;" but, then, this is part of that fire which our Lord came to cast on earth. "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled" (St. Luke xii. 49). You need never fear that God will not kindle this fire by His grace, if only your hearts are prepared for it.

We read how the Prophet Elias offered sacrifice. He built an altar, and laid the wood in order and the sacrifice upon it, and poured water upon the sacrifice; and then, when the time of the holocaust came, he called upon the name of the Lord. "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the holocaust, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (III. Kings xviii. 38).

If you, my dear brethren, would always take reasonable pains to prepare your souls by thought and prayer you may be sure that Almighty God would send down into your hearts the heavenly fire which is necessary to complete your work.

To obtain sorrow for our sins we must first have something to be sorry for. Of course, all men, without exception, are guilty of some sin, and have abundant grounds for sorrow. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I. St. John i. 8). Yet there are a great many people who find it difficult to see much fault in their own conduct. They take false views of their obligations and actions, or they have a great power of making excuses for themselves, and their own self-love makes out such a good case for them, that they cannot find much to grieve about. "Who can understand sins? From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord" (Ps. xviii. 13). If you practically have nothing to confess it is very difficult to be truly sorry. You must, therefore, make a point of bringing something before your mind, either of recent occurrence, or in your past life, which you can make the subject of sorrowful confession—that is, something which you feel as an important, serious matter. It is not necessary that you should mention any past sin in detail, but you should have something present to your mind, the evil of which really comes home to you, and of which you are heartily ashamed.

A good examination of conscience is, as I have before said, the groundwork of your contrition; but, then, it must be a sorrowful examination. "I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Is. xxxviii. 15). If the examination is made to get up a case for yourself, as a lawyer defending you

might do, or out of mere idleness and curiosity, or for the love of thinking of your own doings, it is not much good; but a *sorrowful* examination is the best means for obtaining a true repentance.

We cannot really repent of sin unless we properly understand its nature, and this is a special gift of the Holy Spirit of God. Our Lord says: "When He shall come He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (St. John xvi. 8). No one can understand the enormity and guilt of sin, or its terrible consequences, without the grace and light of this Holy Spirit. No created being can ever fully and adequately understand the evil of sin, since it is, in a certain sense, an infinite evil; but the higher we go, and the more fully we are enlightened, the greater does the evil appear. We read sometimes of the horror and hatred of sin which the saints displayed, as, for instance, when Queen Blanche said to her young son, St. Louis of France: "I love you, my dear son, with all the tenderness a mother is capable of; but I would infinitely rather see you fall down dead at my feet than that you should ever commit a mortal sin." Such a feeling as this would almost appear to the eyes of men to be an affectation; but it is simply the natural consequences of the strong light of grace which was within them. If we could ascend into heaven, and see the fear and horror which the very idea of offending God caused in that blessed company, we should have some better notion of what sin was.

Sin is something evil in itself, which is against our nature, and repugnant to right reason, and more or less shameful according to the excellence of the virtue to which it is opposed. Some sins in themselves are very shameful and abominable, whilst, on the other hand, some do not appear so revolting to the imagination and conscience of man. Besides the evil of the sinful act in itself, however, there is what constitutes the essence of every sin, whatever its nature may be, and that is the guilt of a rebellion against God. No matter what the nature of your sin may be—whether it is an action for which all men would cry shame upon you, or one of those things in which fallen man is apt to glory—if it is a sin at all, it is essentially and necessarily disgraceful and abominable, because it is a wilful disobedience and a rebellion against your Creator; it is "worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25).

It is on this aspect of sin that we ought most to dwell; by such and such acts I have rebelled against my Creator; I have turned my back upon Him and taken part with His enemies. I have gone out into the darkness and renounced my place as a

child of God! It matters little, in comparison, what the act may be in itself; if it were something for which all men together praised me, what comfort would that be? Every mortal sin—of whatever kind it may be—is essentially an act of rebellion against God, which quenches the spiritual life of the soul and puts out its light; it "fixes a gulf" between you and all good, and makes you, for the time, the object of God's indignation and contempt. "Thou hast despised all them that fall off from Thy judgments" (Ps. cxviii. 118). Every sin is an act of disloyalty against the Master whom we are bound to serve, and of ingratitude against the Father whom we are all bound to love. "The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master; if, then, I be a father, where is My honour? and if I be a master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 6).

We can, however, best tell the real evil of sin by seeing its effects, and reflecting on its consequences, just as we can best judge of the virulence of a poison by seeing the fearful effects it produces on the human frame: we cannot tell much of the nature of the poison in itself, but there is no mistaking its consequences. "I saw Satan, as lightning, falling from heaven" (St. Luke x. 18). In these words our Lord describes to us the effect of rebelling against God. Satan fell like lightning from heaven the instant his sin was consummated—his beauty and glory were gone—he had divided himself for ever from all good, and no place could be found for him in heaven, even for one moment. Such must ever be the effect of mortal sin upon every creature that it touches.

The soul of a Christian, whilst in a state of grace, is always something exceedingly beautiful. The "charity of God" has become a garment wherewith it is continually clothed, and all the natural defects and shortcomings are covered over by the beauty of its robe of habitual grace. As a man, he may be feeble in body, and full of faults in mind; as a man, he may be neglected and despised, and even hated by other men; but as a Christian, enjoying the favour of his Creator, he must always have an immense value, and a great and glorious position. "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Ps. viii. 6); and the most glorious of God's angels does not disdain to call him his fellow-servant; every day he goes on heaping up to himself merit for Jesus Christ's sake. Almost everything that he does is of value, because he is a branch of the vine, and, as such, he cannot but bear fruit. Then comes mortal sin, and a change takes place, as sudden as Satan's fall. "And I passed by, and lo! he was not;

and I sought him, and his place was not found" (Ps. xxxvi. 36). He has fallen from his place, his beauty is gone, all the store of merit which he has gathered together has disappeared, and he is left stained and disgraced by his crime in taking to his heart a creature instead of his God. When the dark shadow of sin comes between man and his God, that "glory and honour" with which he was crowned is taken from him, the light is darkened, the fire is extinguished, and the altar is overthrown: "if any one remaineth not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth" (St. John xv. 6).

It does not matter what a man may have done before; he may, to use St. Paul's words, "have given his goods to feed the poor, and delivered his body to be burned;" the poison of one deliberate act of rebellion, of one mortal sin, is enough to undo undo all: "it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 3). If it were conceivable that mortal sin could make its way into heaven, all the beauty and glory and merits of any one of the saints would instantly be destroyed by one mortal sin, and the terrible fall of Lucifer would be repeated.

How, my dear brethren, is it possible to think of any act which has produced such fearful changes in our own souls without being deeply grieved? "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance;" is there not also grief over the miserable fall of the innocent and the holy? The angels grieved over you when you fell away; will you not grieve over yourselves, and over the actions that led you to such a fall?

Mortal sin is a loss and a disgrace; but, as we well know, it is also a terrible danger. The effect of mortal sin on the soul of man in this life is but a figure of that terrible and eternal evil which will be its consequence when it becomes the fixed and irrevocable condition of the soul. All that we hear of the terrible justice of God fills us with dismay. The finite mind of man recoils with dread when it comes in contact with an infinite God. "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire" (Deut. iv. 24). He is infinite and incomprehensible in all His attributes. "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds; Thy justice is as the mountains of God; Thy judgments are a great deep" (Ps. xxxv. 6).

If you want to know what God thinks of sin, and what it is in reality, you have only to meditate on the terrible punishment of sin which is revealed to us. "The pool of fire," "which is the second death" (Apoc. xxi 8); "the worm that shall not die," and "and the fire that shall not be quenched" (Is. lxvi. 24):

these are the things which best teach us how great is the evil of mortal sin, and how terrible are its consequences. We know that God is infinitely just and infinitely merciful—that is almost the first truth taught us both by faith and by reason; and yet His justice every day casts numbers of His creatures into the fire of hell, because of mortal sin. Sin is so terrible in its own nature, and so grievous an evil, that nothing finite can adequately atone for it; and, when once the soul has cast away the atoning Blood of Jesus Christ by final impenitence, the stain of mortal sin can never be effaced, but holds possession of its victim for ever and for ever.

If ever you have committed a deliberate, grievous sin, by which you cast off the friendship of your Creator, you had eternal damnation staring you in the face. "There is but one step between me and death." Every moment that you remained in mortal sin was a moment of extreme danger.

The danger is past, if it ever existed, for you, we will hope and believe, and you have made your peace with God; but, my dear brethren, is not the mere fact of having been exposed to such an awful peril, even for a moment, a thing to be remembered? The man who has narrowly escaped from a shocking death shudders when he comes near the scene of his danger. He goes over, again and again, the hour of peril, and trembles to think what might have been. But what is earthly peril compared to the danger of eternal death?

A Christian, then, ought to have a fear and horror of mortal sin, even if he believes that it has been forgiven—much more if he fears that its terrible consequences are still hanging over him. We should all of us say, with the Psalmist: "Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. cxviii. 120); for a great fear of sin and its consequences, and a deep sense of the terrors of God's judgments, is almost necessary as the groundwork of a true repentance.

And what have we gained by all the evil we have done in the course of our lives? "What fruit, therefore, have you in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of them is death. . . . for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 21). Even the most prosperous of sinners will be compelled to own that the fruit has been small, and the bitterness great. "They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands" (Ps. lxxv. 6). After the most successful career of vice, men wake up and find nothing in their hands. Look well at what you have gained by sin, and ask: Is it for this that I have offended God and rebelled against Him—that I have stained my conscience and run the risk of eternal damnation?

"I did but taste a little honey, and behold I die" (I. Kings xiv. 43).

We must now, however, speak more fully of what ought to be the principal motive for contrition, and that is the pure and disinterested love of God. We may be sorry for our sins, for many reasons, and we should make use of all the motives which we can find for sorrow; but the best and most perfect is the love of God. When we grieve for sin, not on account of the evil it has done to ourselves, but simply because it is an offence against One who is infinitely good, our sorrow is more pleasing to God, and more effectual in obtaining pardon, than any selfish regret can be. We must, then, dwell upon God's goodness and God's love, and learn to hate sin for His sake, because it is His enemy.

The way in which we can best bring ourselves to a real and supreme love for Almighty God is by dwelling on the mercy and kindness which He has shown to us in the mystery of the Incarnation. The very object of this most high mystery was to attract the poor, cold hearts of men to their Creator. In His infinite divinity they cannot understand Him, and it is hard for them to be attracted by attributes which were so far beyond their reach; therefore He came down into the midst of them, to draw their hearts to Him in His human nature. He was born and lived amongst men, that He might give them the opportunity of knowing Him; and He suffered in their sight, that He might touch their hearts and draw them to Himself. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (St. John xii. 32).

If we would learn, then, to hate sin heartily and generously, and to grieve bitterly over the offences we have ourselves committed, we had best go to our Lord in His Passion, and see the work of sin. "Truly, He hath borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we were healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. liii. 4). Let us go, then, to our Blessed Lord on the night of His Passion, and try to learn from Him how great is that iniquity which He has borne for us.

Our Lord had determined to redeem us from sin by Himself bearing the pain of it: "forgiving you all offences, blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Col. ii. 13). But, first, He would show

us how to grieve for sin. He would not wait for the scourge and the nails, but He would begin of Himself to taste the bitterness of the sin which He had taken upon Himself, and it required nothing more to afflict Him with an agony of grief. "And, taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad. Then he saith to them, 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch with Me.' And going a little farther, He fell upon His face, praying and saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt'" (St. Matt. xxvi. 37).

What was in this chalice which was so bitter as to make our Lord "sorrowful even unto death"? He had just come from that last banquet, the Paschal Feast—the Pasch which He had longed for. "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." He had spoken to them nothing but words of consolation and encouragement, but the first taste of that chalice, which He was to drink, was so bitter, that "His soul was sorrowful even unto death." What was this bitterness? Nothing else but sin and the consequences of sin. The Most Holy Lord God, in His human nature, had taken upon Himself the sins of His creatures, and Himself deigned to taste the bitterness, the shame, the misery and punishment of sin.

Think what this chalice contained. In it were all the torments and ignominies of the Passion. The bodily pain and mental anguish which Jesus was to suffer—all the reproaches and insults that were to be heaped upon Him that night and on the morrow—were all now before His eyes, and His heart was overflowing with the anguish which such a sight must cause to the human heart. All this He felt because He had man's nature, but, more than all, He felt the sin of which His Passion was the just penalty. Our Blessed Lord felt Himself loaded with the iniquities of men, with all their ingratitude and folly, and all their malice and perversity. With that infinite hatred of sin which He must necessarily have, our Lord found laid upon Him the guilt of all the shameful sins that men had committed and were to commit till the end of the world. "And with the wicked He was reputed" (St. Mark xv. 28). Can we wonder that the most pure soul of Jesus revolted from all this burden of shame and sin, and that, "being in an agony, He prayed the longer, and His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground" (St. Luke xxii. 43). He had desired to suffer for men, as He tells us in the words: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (St. Luke xii. 50). But how was He to bear

all the load of sin which was laid upon Him? How could He, the Most Holy, endure to be a sinner? "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away."

But let us not think of the sins of other men which do not concern us; let us think of our own sins. We all of us, my brethren, had our share in this bitter chalice which Jesus had to drink; let us think of all the rebellion and ingratitude we have contributed; think how much deliberation and wilfulness, how much sinning against light and resistance to grace there has been in the sins which we have committed in our time. Surely, as we have had such a share in mixing this most bitter chalice, we ought not to refuse to drink it with Him by some little share of sorrow. He, the innocent Lamb of God, grieves over our sins and their punishment; shall we not, at least, try to join our tears to His Most Precious Blood?

Every detail of our Lord's Passion supplies us with fresh reasons for hating sin, and grieving over it with all our hearts. Stand by whilst Jesus is so cruelly scourged, and ask what it is that gives weight to those ignominious and disgraceful lashes? It is not the cruelty of the executioners, but the malice of our sins, so that we all have our share in them. See Him, again, crowned with thorns and rejected by His own people. "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Can we not recognize the voice of our own sins? Is it not precisely what we have said ourselves, again and again, by consenting to mortal sin?

When you prepare to confess your sins, then, and the thought of the number and variety of evil deeds by which you have offended God is once more brought strongly before you, go in spirit to our Lord's feet, and pour out your souls before Him. Do not be contented with mere forms of words, but tell Him, in the language of your own heart, how much you grieve for your offences—how heartily you wish that you had never sinned, and how strongly determined you are, with the help of His grace, to amend your life for the future.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee; I am not now worthy to be called Thy son." Your first thoughts should be shame for yourself and your past life, and a hatred and detestation of the sins which have brought you down to so wretched a condition, with an earnest desire to be cleansed. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me" (Ps. l. 4). But, then, your great desire should be to go, with St. Mary Magdalen, to our Lord's feet, with a tender personal love to

Him, and a great grief for sin, because it has displeased Him. She put aside all human respect, and was indifferent to the company that sat around ; she cared nothing for what the world might say or think of her ; her only desire was to show her love, and to obtain pardon. So "with tears she washed His feet." Let us place ourselves with her at the feet of Jesus, and try with our tears to wash away past stains ; or let us take our stand with her at the foot of the cross, and join in her loving, tender contrition, and beg that the Precious Blood of Jesus may intercede for us, that it may cleanse us from sin, and fill us with the strength and grace we need to fight against it for the future. "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much." Let us try to love much, and we need not fear but that many sins will be forgiven, and much grace will be granted to us.

SERMON LXXVI.

The Holy Eucharist.

"Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions" (Deut. iv. 7).

I NOW come to speak of the greatest of all sacraments—the Holy Eucharist. This is, pre-eminently, the Blessed Sacrament—high in dignity above even the other sacred rites by which Jesus has communicated to us the saving merits of His Precious Blood. They are, indeed, blessed as the fountains of grace; but this is the very source of grace. They are, as it were, the rays of the sun; but this is the very sun itself, since it is not only a sacrament, but the Author of the Sacraments—our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the great treasure of the Christian Church. Our Lord sent His Apostles out to preach the Gospel without any worldly goods. They were to take nothing for their journey, "neither staff, nor scrip, nor bread, nor money" (St. Luke ix. 3); but they were to carry with them one great treasure, and that was His own Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. One of the fathers tells us that, "after our Saviour was taken up into heaven, the Apostles, before being scattered over the whole world, being together in onenesss of mind, passed whole days in prayer; and, having found the Mystic Sacrifice of the Lord's Body a great consolation, they sang it at very great length; for this and teaching they considered preferable to anything else. With very great gladness and much joy they were instant in this Divine Sacrifice, ever bearing in mind the Lord's Word, which says, 'This is My Body,' and 'Do this in memory of Me;' and 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in him'" (St. Proclus). Their converts were to be found ever "persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts. ii. 42).

From that time forward to the present the Holy Sacrament has been the one great treasure and consolation of the Christian Church.

In the days of persecution, when the faithful had to hide for their lives under ground, they carried with them their treasure into the catacombs, and celebrated Mass upon the tombs of the

martyrs; and, when peace came, their first care was to erect grand churches in which to deposit the Sacred Body of the Lord. When missionaries, the successors of the Apostles in after ages, went out to convert the heathen, they cared not for gold and silver, but relied only on that great Presence which they took with them, "breaking bread from house to house" (Acts ii. 46), as the Apostles had done.

At all times, whether in peace or in strife—whether under the dome of St. Peter's, or in the poorest shed used for a church—the Holy Sacrifice, the Blessed Sacrament, has been the treasure of the Church—the treasure which the world did not give, and cannot take away. Around the Blessed Sacrament, moreover, has grown up the whole worship of the Christian Church; her liturgy is to do honour to it, her ceremonial is grouped around it. Why are her churches so gorgeous and her ceremonial so elaborate? Simply to do honour to the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church is but His house—the altar His mercy-seat; the vestments of the clergy are the externals of His court, and the lights which burn before the altar are the signs of His Presence.

Whatever the Church has to do, the Blessed Sacrament is her great resource. Is the Church rejoicing? Is she mourning? Is she in danger? On all occasions her people crowd around our Lord's throne—the Holy Mass is celebrated, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, the candles are lighted, the incense ascends to heaven, carrying with it the praises, or the wailing and supplication of all her children.

Of all Catholic devotions, the first is that to the Blessed Sacrament. Into whatever church you go, at whatever hour you may present yourself, the first thing that catches your eye is the reverence paid to the Presence of our Lord. It may be at a High Mass, when the altar is adorned with candles and flowers, and surrounded by the clergy; it is, perhaps, the time of the Consecration, and every head is bowed down in reverence as the Blessed Host is elevated; or it may be a solemn Benediction, when our Lord, in the Blessed Sacrament, is placed on His throne over the altar, and the faithful bow their heads for His blessing; or the church may be silent and obscure, with none present but a few poor worshippers on their knees; still it is the lamp that hangs before the tabernacle that first attracts your attention, and you will observe the solemn genuflection made by every one who passes before the altar. Always, under every phase—whether costly or poor, full of people, or deserted—a Catholic church is the house of God; and there is a solemnity about it which speaks to the heart of every one who enters. Even

strangers can hardly fail to be struck by it, and to ask, Whence come this special solemnity and reverence? It is, indeed, full of a great Presence, of which all the external symbols are but the shadows. "Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And trembling, he said, How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 16).

Well may the church be filled with the reverence befitting the Divine Presence, since we have here the true mercy-seat of God upon earth. In the Old Law Almighty God placed His mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies, in His Temple. "Thou shalt make a propitiatory of the purest gold. Thou shalt make also two cherubims of beaten gold: spreading their wings and covering the oracle, and let them look one towards the other, their faces being turned to the propitiatory wherewith the ark is to be covered. Thence will I give orders, and will speak to thee over the propitiatory, and from the midst of the two cherubims" (Exod. xxv. 17).

Nothing on earth could be grander or more venerable than this spot which God chose for His mercy-seat—in which He was pleased to hear and answer the petitions of His people, and great was the reverence which surrounded it.

It *represented* the Presence of the Almighty; but, in reality, He was there only as He ever must be throughout the universe. In the Christian mercy-seat, on our altars, we have the Real Presence of God Incarnate. St. John saw Him in His vision: "In the midst of the seven candlesticks, One like to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white, like white wool and as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars, and from His mouth came out a two-edged sword, and His face was as the sun shineth in His power. And when I had seen Him I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying: Fear not, I am the First and the Last, and alive, and was dead; and behold, I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell" (Apoc. i. 12). Such is the Presence which our Lord grants to us in the Sacrament of the Altar. He conceals Himself from our sight because we are frail, mortal men, and, like St. John, we should fall at His feet as dead men, could we see Him in His glory; but He is present wholly and entirely in His Divine and human nature—God and Man—with all the rights to glory and reverence which belong to Him.

On every altar, in the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord resides, and keeps His Court as He does in heaven. "And I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing, as it were, slain, having seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth . . . . and when He had opened the book the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty ancients, fell down before the Lamb, having, every one of them, harps and golden vials, full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints: and they sung a new canticle, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and open the seals thereof; because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in Thy Blood, out of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation" (Apoc. v. 6).

"The merciful and gracious Lord hath made a memorial of His wonderful works, He hath given food to them that fear Him" (Ps. cx. 4). In the Holy Sacrament—the sacred food that He gives to men—our Lord renews the wonderful things that He did on earth: He is still the hidden Deity as He was in the stable of Bethlehem, hiding Himself in humility from the sight of men: He is still the same Jesus of Nazareth that He was when He walked through the streets of Jerusalem, or the cornfields of Galilee: as He was when the people came out in throngs to hear His word, and receive food at His hands. He is the Lamb "standing, as it were, slain," and He continually puts before us, and mystically renews, His most Blessed Passion and death, and His glorious resurrection. The Blessed Sacrament is the continuation of His incarnation, and every one of the wonderful works of the Incarnate God has its counterpart and completion in the hidden life of Jesus on the altar.

"My Father worketh until now, and I work" (St. John v. 17). In the Holy Eucharist our Lord is in His Church, as He was in the midst of His Apostles, guiding and ruling His Church, calling sinners to Himself, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and working out the sanctification of the elect. He is before us as the perpetual example of all virtues: the example of a hidden life, with its virtues of humility and retirement. "Standing, as it were, slain." He sets us the perpetual example of sacrifice, and constantly calls upon us to "deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Him." He sets the example of patience and unworldliness, ready at all times to help the weakness, and supply the wants of the poorest and lowliest of His children.

Truly, this sacrament is the memorial of His wonderful works, and wonderful it is in itself, and in everything that surrounds it. Who can tell how many miracles of power and love are con-

tained in its institution? In the Incarnation He "debased Himself, taking the form of a servant," and "humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 7). In the Holy Eucharist our Lord has made Himself obedient to His own creatures through all time. "The Lord obeying the voice of man." He has humbled Himself to be their servant, ready at all times to do their will, and to minister to their wants. He has put his honour into the hands of men, not of good men only, but of the wicked, so that they may honour Him and show Him reverence if they will; whilst, on the other hand, they have it in their power to profane and outrage Him. How often, in the course of ages, has our Lord allowed His Holy Sacrament to be profaned? How often have gross external sacrileges been perpetrated! How often has He been insulted by hypocritical homage, and especially by unworthy Communions! How often has our Lord suffered men to come to Him with Judas's "Hail, Rabbi," with his hypocritical kiss on their lips, and his treason in their hearts! And yet, through it all, He has been faithful to the promise He once made: "I am with you all days, to the consummation of the world."

The Blessed Sacrament is called the "Mystery of Faith," because it is a combination and memorial of all God's wonders —the wonders of "His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering," and also of the wonders of His power. Once during His life on earth our Lord changed water into wine; but this wonder of "Transubstantiation" He repeats daily in the Holy Mass, when the bread and wine on the altar are changed into His own Body and Blood. Once or twice He fed thousands by the multiplication of the bread, but in the Blessed Sacrament He every day feeds thousands and hundreds of thousands. In every church He is present, and yet He is not divided; He gives Himself in communion to all that approach, and yet gives Himself entirely to each one—*sumit unus, sumunt mille, quantum isti, tantum ille, nec sumptus consumitur.* The external, visible miracles which He worked on earth were great and magnificent proofs of divine power, but they were only the symbols and indications of the miracles of a higher order which He was to continue to the end of time. He worked these lesser miracles in the sight of men, that we might be encouraged to believe the miracles which we cannot see.

God is wonderful in all His works, and most wonderful in that sacrament which is a memorial of them. He has exerted His power over nature, in order to hide Himself under the lowly forms of bread and wine; He has veiled His glory, and has become a hidden God in His own creation, to be in the midst of

men, and to become their servant. Why has He done so? Who can find reasons for the wonderful works of God? "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?—or who hath been His counsellor?—or who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made Him" (Rom. xi. 34). We cannot fathom the plans and designs of the Almighty. We see "in a glass in a dark manner," and we sometimes fancy that we understand; but even in those things which we seem to understand, how incom plete is our comprehension! We know very little even of those things which appear to us the plainest. "Man cannot be justified compared with God. If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one for a thousand" (Job. ix. 2).

Yet, with all this, we *may* ask, we may reverently search into the secrets of God's designs, and, with the Blessed Mother of God, we may say to our Lord: "Why hast Thou done so to us?" Why should our Lord have instituted such a Sacrament, by which He makes Himself, in some sort, dependent on His creatures, and in which He becomes their servant?

The Blessed Sacrament is a continuation of the Incarnation. What God began amongst men, by becoming man and living with them, He continues in His Eucharistic Presence. The difficulties to be overcome in the one mystery are much like those of the other; the objections to one are the objections to the other; and, at the same time, the reason of one is the reason for the other. If we want to understand anything about the Holy Eucharist, we must first learn to meditate on the Incarnation.

That God should have become incarnate, and come down to this earth, is the greatest of all conceivable mysteries. He, who was from all eternity, and self-existing, condescended to be born in time, and to appear on this earth as a new-born babe; He, whom the whole universe cannot contain, "did not abhor the Virgin's womb," and chose to be laid in the narrow manger; He, from whom all have received, and "in whom all creatures live and move, and have their being," chose to be dependent on men for the necessaries of life. The All-wise and All-perfect appeared to "grow daily in wisdom and age and grace before God and man;" and He who, of His own nature, could know no sorrow, condescends to suffer all the woes of body and mind which men have to bear.

Nothing but boundless love could have thought of this condescension, and yet, in a sense, it was a necessity. In His divine nature, God is infinitely removed from His creatures. His creation, with its immeasurable vastness, and the riches and beauty which meet us at every step, is as nothing in His sight;

if it were magnified a thousand and a thousandfold, it could never approach to the immensity of its Creator. "Behold, the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance; behold, the islands are as a little dust, and Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations are before Him, as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Isaias xl. 15).

So in the moral world, if we could unite the intellects and mental excellencies of men and angels, not only could they not reach, but they could not approach to the Almighty Mind that created them. You may go up into the highest mountain, and see peak after peak rising above you, till you reach the highest; but even the highest appears just as far off from the sun as the lowliest valley; so you may go on, rising in the scale of creation, and through all the choirs of angels in heaven, giving to each rank the brightest endowments that your fancy can paint, and then the highest is—not in appearance merely, but literally and truly—as far off from the infinite Creator as the meanest of created things, since all the united efforts and aspirations of creatures cannot bring them one step nearer to the level of their Creator.

Between God and creatures, then, there is an infinite gulf, which no finite being can possibly pass over. If, therefore, God is to come near to His creatures, it is He, not they, who must pass the immeasurable distance which separates them. They cannot possibly share His nature, and, if they are to be united to Him, it is He who must condescend to come down to them, and share their finite nature. "I have loved Thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi. 3). The infinite and everlasting love of the great God made Him pass the gulf which divided Him from His creatures. He took upon Himself their nature, and became one of them. He assumed a body and soul, with all the natural powers and feelings of men, that men might learn to sympathize with Him, and that so He might raise them to Himself. In the human nature which He had assumed the great God learned to practise the lowly virtues and human affections which belong to the condition of men, that He might set before them the most perfect pattern of humility, patience, and obedience, and teach them, through many tribulations, to enter into His glory. "And, whereas indeed He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and, being consummated, He became to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 8).

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways My

ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaias lv. 8). In His Divine nature God was above the understanding and sympathy of His creatures; He was too vast, and too mighty, and too far off from them, so that it was hard for them even to love Him. For this reason He became man, that men might sympathize with Him, and take Him for their model, and give Him their hearts.

What God did for the whole human race in His Incarnation He repeats and continues, for every individual, in the Blessed Sacrament. He condescended to become one of us, and to walk on earth. He let men hear His voice and learn His lesson; but how shall we bridge over the ages which separate us from Him? How is He to complete His work, and come near to the heart of each one of us? In His mortal life He could be present with but few of His people. One age and one country only could possess Him during His sojourn upon earth; and men cannot possibly pass over the gulf of time which separates distant ages.

The same love which bridged over the vast gulf which divides His divinity from creatures can alone complete its work by passing over the intervals of time and space. He is the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," and every age must, in some sense, possess Him. His coming was anticipated by the sacrifices which brought His Passion near to individual men, and made them look forward to His actual coming; and, after that coming, He has continued His presence to them for ever in the Sacrament of the Altar.

In this sacrament He continues the Incarnation, and takes a permanent place in His creation; and, to do so, deigns to expose Himself to all the accidents which befall men. He is with His people for ever; He went down with them into the catacombs, and was persecuted with them. "He went down with them into the pit, and in bands did not forsake them" (Wisd. x. 13). When the faithful had to flee from place to place, and were like sheep in the midst of wolves, He loyally bore His part, and did not disdain to expose Himself to insult and sacrilege with them. He might, if He would, have preserved His Sacramental Presence from the smallest indignity; but, no! "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my chalice" (Ps. xv. 5), and the Lord also chose for Himself the lot and the chalice of His people

"Lo, I am with you all days, till the consummation of the world!" Neither the ingratitude of man, nor the power of the

enemy—neither blasphemy nor sacrilege can ever make Him withdraw that Presence which He has promised.

Our own country was once covered with shrines erected to do honour to Him in the Holy Sacrament; but the storm came, and His sanctuaries were dishonoured, and His Sacred Presence violated, and He fled with His people, and was content to share their lot of persecution, whilst His Sacramental Presence was blasphemed and ridiculed in those very churches which were raised to Him. But now He has come back to us, and His Sacramental Presence is once more to be found stealing over the land; and in a thousand churches the sanctuary lamp tells us where Jesus is to be found in the sacrament of His love.

All the things which strike us as marvellous in the Blessed Sacrament have their counterpart in the Incarnation. It is wonderful that Jesus should descend upon the altar, and that no man should see Him. "You know not whence I come, or whither I go" (St. John viii. 14); but so it was at Bethlehem. "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, the Almighty Word leaped down from heaven from Thy royal throne" (Wisd. xviii. 14). It is a marvel that He should be amongst us, and that men should go on, in their ordinary ways, without thinking of Him; but so it was whilst He was visibly amongst them. "There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not" (St. John i. 26). We wonder to think that He can allow His Body and Blood to be violated by sacrilegious hands, and profaned by unworthy lips; but was it not so in the garden of Gethsemane? The reproaches cast upon Him in the Holy Sacrament—the blasphemous words we sometimes hear—are but the echo of the insults and mockeries heaped upon him in His Passion and now, as then, His only answer is, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In the Blessed Sacrament, then, our Lord does for all ages and for all countries what in his mortal life He did for one. He does it, not as then, in a manner to be apprehended by the natural senses, but just as really and truly, although His way of acting is concealed under the sacramental veils, and His presence can be discovered only by the light of faith.

He came to be always with His Church as a body—to be its treasure and its life, and, at the same time, to be the strength, rest, and refreshment of every Christian soul. He came to be the friend and companion of all classes of people—to be the help and reward of the penitent just turning away from sin, and to be the perfection of the saints. He was to be the ready help of men battling with the world, and hard pressed by temptation,

and to be the solace and paraclete of a hidden spiritual life. He was to give Himself as nourishment to the child just entering the world, and to be the viaticum of the sick and weary who are just going forth into it; He was to be to each one "the Bread of Heaven, containing in itself every delight."

Our Lord knew how much we all needed Him, and that without His own personal presence all the ministrations of men would be insufficient. "I am the vine, you the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me, you can do nothing" (St. John xv. 5). How were we to abide in the vine? Our Lord Himself tells: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in me, and I in him" (St. John vi. 57). On this St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "If a man take two pieces of wax and melt them, and pour the one into the other, they necessarily mingle; so, also, he that receiveth the Body and Blood of the Lord doth become so joined with the Lord, that he is to be found in Christ, and Christ in him." Thus, then, our Lord has provided the most perfect way in which we can abide in Him, and be most completely united with Him in body and in spirit.

O sacrum Convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia: et futuræ gloriæ nobis pignus datur.

"O sacred banquet in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion renewed, the mind replenished with grace, and a pledge of eternal glory is given to us." Amen.

SERMON LXXVII.

Holy Communion.

"My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (St. John vi. 56).

OUR Lord has left us the Sacrament of His Body and Blood under the form of food, in order to impress upon us, in the most striking manner, the vital importance of receiving it. For the preservation of natural life nourishment is necessary, and, to maintain healthy and vigorous life, the food must be regular and sufficient; and it is necessary that we should have the power of drawing nourishment from the food supplied to us by taking its strength into ourselves, so as to live by it. If we were to neglect this first function of natural life, we should fall into disease, and surely die. The Psalmist says: "I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered, because I forgot to eat my bread" (Ps. ci. 5).

What is true of our natural life holds good, in a wonderful way, of the life of the soul; we need a constant supply of the grace of God to feed our souls, and, to afford this food, Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord has made the Holy Communion, under ordinary circumstances, an essential condition of spiritual life. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (St. John vi. 54); and, moreover, to carry out the parallel, you must receive the Blessed Sacrament regularly and frequently if you would keep your souls in spiritual health and vigour.

One of the most important duties of a Christian, then, is to know how properly to avail himself of the Holy Eucharist, as a means of spiritual nourishment, by receiving Holy Communion devoutly and profitably. The grace which we receive depends largely on the way in which we approach the holy table, and we need all the knowledge and all the piety we can bring with us by way of preparation. Our Lord accommodates Himself to the capacities and wants of His people; He is the nourishment of children, and is contented with the little knowledge and preparation they can afford; but, at the same time, He is the bread of the strong, and taxes to the uttermost all the intellect and devotion of the greatest saints. He wants from each of us *all* that we can do, and He is satisfied with that.

If we would learn how to prepare ourselves for receiving the Holy Communion we cannot do better than turn to the earliest and most authoritative instruction ever given to Christians—I mean that left to us by St. Paul. He says: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, in the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and, giving thanks, broke and said, Take ye and eat; this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner the chalice also, after He had supped, saying, This chalice is the New Testament in my Blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me. For, as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord. Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep. But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (I. Cor. xi. 23).

In this most impressive passage, my dear brethren, there are many things to observe. The Apostle begins by the emphatic assertion of the Real Presence. "I received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you." Words could not be found to express the Catholic faith more plainly; if we wished to find emphatic language in which to declare the faith of the Church about transubstantiation, what could we say stronger or clearer than the words of the Apostle? St. Paul repeats the most distinct and precise words of our Lord Himself at His Last Supper, and draws from them the exact and obvious conclusion which follows from the doctrine of the Real Presence: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."

He then goes on to tell us what follows from this great mystery—that we are bound to look carefully into ourselves before we presume to receive; "Let a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread," and warns us of the consequences of neglect in the words: "Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep."

All these points require careful consideration, and in them are included all that is necessary in preparing for Communion. St. Paul says that men eat and drink judgment to themselves by "not discerning the body of the Lord." It is evident that the groundwork of all preparation is well to "discern" the true

nature and excellence of the divine food which God gives to us in His Holy Sacrament. If a man were to receive Holy Communion, not knowing what it was, it is plain that he would receive unworthily. He could not possibly have the dispositions of mind, the devotion, and reverence which are due to the Holy Sacrament if he did not understand its greatness. In it our Lord is the hidden Deity—*Adoro te devote latens Deitas*, "I adore Thee devoutly, O hidden Deity, which liest concealed under these forms." And it is plain that we must know how to discern this hidden Deity if we would worthily approach to Him. The more clearly and deeply we discern His presence, the more we are filled with the thought of it, the more devoutly we shall receive. The angels and saints in heaven, "the ancients and living creatures," having their harps and golden vials, "fall down before the Lamb, and sing to Him a new canticle," because they see Him face to face; and we, too, must try by faith to pierce through the sacramental veil that hides Him from us, and we shall share in their joy and adoration.

By "discerning the body of the Lord," we mean many things. We have first to understand, as far as our capacity extends, what God has revealed to us about His Holy Sacrament. It is the "mystery of faith," and of our faith we must learn it—that is, we must know all the Catholic Church teaches us about the nature of our Lord's presence. We must also know what is His dignity, and what are His rights; we must understand what is the object of His coming amongst us, and why He "delights to be with the children of men," and what it is that He expects us to do.

The Catechism tells us that "the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine." Consider the force of this word *true*. It is the true Body of our Lord, because it is not His Body merely as a figure or representation. You might say of a statue or a picture that it was the Body of our Lord—that His arms were extended and His sacred Head crowned with thorns; but you would never think of calling it the true Body—it is only the representation of that true Body; but the Holy Sacrament is the thing itself—that very same true Body which was once betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and delivered up for us to "death, even the death of the cross."

In the Holy Sacrament our Lord continues His Incarnation; He does not renew it. He does not become again incarnate; but He gives once more to His people that same Blessed Body which suffered and rose again, and is now placed at the right

hand of God in heaven. To use the words of the Church's hymn:

Ave verum corpus natum, de Maria Virgine.

"Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary, which truly suffered and was sacrificed on the cross for man, from whose pierced side issued water and blood, be to us a comfort at the hour of death. O merciful! O tender! O Jesus, Son of Mary!"

Our Lord is in the midst of us in the Holy Sacrament as He was in the midst of His Apostles; but the manner of His Presence is changed. He was then mortal and passible—that is, able to suffer and to die. He was One "tempted in all things like as we are, without sin." He chose to bear pain and weariness, cold and hunger, and would take His share of all the other infirmities that men have to suffer; but now He is immortal and glorified. Christ was "to suffer, and so to enter into His glory;" and from the moment of that glorious rising "death hath no more dominion over Him," and pain or weakness cannot come near Him.

In the Holy Sacrament our Lord is in the world, but the world has no hold on Him; it may insult and defy Him, but it cannot lay hands on Him. Any outrage that may be offered to the Blessed Sacrament is, indeed, a terrible thing, because it displays the sacrilegious malice of men; but it cannot in any way really injure our Lord, because He is glorified and immortal, and beyond the reach of human power. He simply passes through the midst of them, as He did from the men of Nazareth, when "they rose and thrust Him out of the city; and they brought Him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong; but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way" (St. Luke iv. 29). Again, it seems shocking that any accident should happen to the Blessed Sacrament—that, for instance, the church in which it is received should be burnt, and the Sacred Species consumed. Such an event would be painful to the feelings of Christians; but, in reality, if there were no sin, no disrespect and ingratitude, no neglect on the part of men, nothing that happened could be the smallest injury to our Lord. The flames are but His creatures and do His will, and His glorified Body is beyond the power of material things, and is untouched by the elements that men fear—the "fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfil His Word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8).

The one thing that by which men can harm Him is sin; and, although the Almighty God in His mercy speaks of sin as if it

were an injury done to Himself, in reality the injury done falls back on the sinner; and all the iniquities of mankind together, and all the blasphemies ever uttered by men, cannot really take anything from God, or interfere in the least with His eternal blessedness.

The Body of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is glorified, and His Presence is supernatural. Whilst He was living upon earth with His Apostles He was here naturally—that is, His Body had all the properties, the size, shape, and appearance which naturally belonged to the condition He had assumed. He saw and heard as men see and hear, and moved from place to place as we do. He was conformed in all things to the natural laws which regulate bodies on earth, except when He chose in some miraculous manner to suspend their force, as when He walked upon the sea, or was transfigured in the sight of His Apostles. In the Blessed Sacrament, however, our Lord is present with another kind of existence, and one which we cannot understand. He is truly and really present, but He is present wholly and completely in every portion of the Sacred Host—in a manner which is supernatural, and belongs to a higher kind of being, of which we have no experience or comprehension. So St. Thomas says: *Fracto demum Sacramento, ne vacilles sed memento, tantum esse sub fragmento quantum toto tegitur*"—"When the sacrament is broken, doubt not, but remember that there is under the fragment all that was concealed in the whole."

Our Lord sees and hears us, too, in the Blessed Sacrament; but He needs not the exercise of the senses in a natural way. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider?" (Ps. xciii. 9). Everything about our Lord's existence and action in the Holy Sacrament is supernatural and miraculous. All this is hard to understand, and quite impossible to realize; but in a certain way it explains to us how our Lord is present on a thousand altars at once, and gives Himself in Communion, at the same moment, to hundreds and thousands of His children.

But the Catechism goes on to tell us that the True Body of Christ is there, "under the appearances of bread and wine." To our senses we have before us mere bread and wine; every outward quality and property of bread and wine remains; everything that can be tested by our senses is there—"*Visus, tactus, gustus in Te fallitur*"—"sight, touch, and taste are deceived in Thee." These outward things—the "accidents," as they are called—are the signs under which, not bread, but the Body of

the Lord, lies hid. "*Sub diversis speciebus, signis tantum et non rebus latent res eximiæ.*"

> Here beneath these signs are hidden
> Priceless things to sense forbidden—
> Sings, not things, are all we see.

The bread to be consecrated must be bread made of wheat, and the wine must be wine of the grape. These are the elements which our Lord has been pleased to select. The bread used in the Latin Church is unleavened—that is, bread made without any yeast; and it is, moreover, bread made in the shape of a wafer. All this, however, is merely a matter of discipline, ordained by the Church for convenience, and according to ancient usage. Mass is said in many countries according to the Eastern rites, and in some of these leavened bread is used for the Holy Sacrifice; but any kind of wheaten bread is valid matter for the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Let us pause to consider why our Lord has chosen these outward appearances of bread and wine. He would hide Himself in His own creation, so as to be constantly in the midst of us, as God and man, in the human nature which He had taken. Why did He assume the lowly form of bread and wine? He came to be our food, that by entering into this intimate union with us, He might nourish and support our spiritual life. To carry out this purpose, He must hide Himself under the form of the food suited to our nature. He might have come amongst us in the shape which the Holy Spirit assumed on the day of Pentecost, and have appeared in "parted tongues, as it were, of fire;" but such a form would have been inconsistent with the gracious purpose for which He remained amongst men. He therefore chose for Himself the form of the simplest, the most universal, the most necessary food by which human life is supported. Bread is the common food of all—of the rich as well as the poor, of the strong as well as the weak; it is the food of man, from youth to age—the food of which we never weary, and, therefore, it is the best fitted to represent the "Bread of Angels," the "Food of Eternal Life."

But now let us ask, How is it that our Lord comes down amongst us in this marvellous way, and resides in the midst of us, and yet there is nothing to show that He has come? Our senses give no warning of the wonderful change that has taken place; the bread that was on the altar has disappeared, and under its outward shape the Lord of Glory lies hid. Angels adore and wonder at the miracle of God's power; but mortal eye cannot perceive the great change that has been accomplished. Why has our Lord given us no sign of His coming, by which we

might know Him? Our Lord came to hide Himself in His creation, and not to destroy the natural order which He had established. He willed, therefore, that His coming should be the mystery of faith, and that all the laws of nature should continue their course, before the eyes of men, uninterrupted by His coming. When it has been His pleasure to do so, He has interrupted those laws, as He did in the many miracles which He worked upon earth; but such miraculous interferences, of their own nature and purpose, can only be occasional, and therefore our Lord allows all things, in appearance, to go on as if He were not present.

Our Lord leaves us to the exercise of that virtue which is specially suited to our condition upon earth—the virtue of faith. "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (St. John xx. 29). These words are consoling and instructive to us. Great, my brethren, would have been the happiness of seeing with mortal eyes the glorious Body which Jesus had raised from the tomb; but it is a greater happiness still, He Himself tells us, to believe without seeing. If it were possible for our Lord to display His Presence on our altars in a miraculous manner, without changing the whole course of human events which His Providence has designed, still He would deprive our devotion of all the merit which is now its great privilege. If we could see upon the altar Jesus in His glory, as the angels do, our reverence and adoration would almost be, as theirs is, a matter of necessity.

No thanks to us if we adore the Lord of Glory when His Presence is obvious to our senses; but if we honour our hidden Lord, whom we know only by faith and love, then, indeed, we make an offering dear and acceptable to Him.

And what is the honour due to our Lord in the Holy Sacrament? Wherever He is, whether in glory or humiliation, whether on His heavenly throne or in the earthly tabernacle in which He reposes, He is the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" He is the "image of the Invisible God—the first-born of every creature; for in Him were all things created in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers—all things were created by Him and in Him; and He is before all, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Body of the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He may hold the primacy" (Col. i. 15).

The most profound adoration, the most perfect love that man can give, fall far short of what is due to our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar. The respect and reverence which are paid to

the mightiest monarch upon earth—the devotion and love which we owe to all the saints in heaven, even including that surpassing homage which is the privilege of the Blessed Mother of God—all these together are as nothing compared to the reverence and love due to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Him we worship as the Mighty God, who deigns to veil His majesty from our eyes under these humble veils; whilst we reverence and honour them, however great they may be, only as His creatures. They, like ourselves, are but dust and ashes before Him, and are "counted as nothing" in His Presence; they, like ourselves, can only cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is, and who is to come!" and "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, honour, and glory, and benediction" (Apoc. v. 12).

We ought all, my dear brethren, to have a great feeling of the reverence and love which our Lord, in the Holy Sacrament, claims from us. There are many devotions in the Catholic Church to which some are specially attracted, whilst others have no particular feeling about them; to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar *every one* is bound to have a special devotion, and in every congregation, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament should be the first to be established, and everywhere the outward ceremonial in honour of our Lord's presence should hold the highest place.

The Catholic Church has a number of usages which are intended to bring home to our minds the reverence due to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved a lamp is kept burning, day and night, to remind us of the Divine Presence. Whenever we pass before the tabernacle, we are instructed to make a genuflection in His honour; whenever His priests, in the course of their functions, have to come specially into His presence, they have to put on the stole, which is the badge of their office, like ministers solemnly entering into the presence of royalty. When the Blessed Sacrament is upon the altar, or, more solemnly still, when it is placed upon the throne above the tabernacle, the candles are lighted, to be, as it were, a guard of honour around Him, and, to our fancy at least, to represent the angels who surround His heavenly throne. The priest offers incense before Him on bended knees, and, when He moves from place to place, the bell is rung, that all may kneel to do Him honour. All these usages, and a thousand more, are intended to remind us of the infinite reverence due to Him in all times and places, that familiarity may never make us forget what belongs to Him as our Sovereign Lord.

Our first duty, then, in approaching the Holy Sacrament, if we

would not "eat and drink judgment to ourselves," is faithfully and truly to discern the Body of the Lord. We must, by a lively and well-instructed faith, discern our Lord really present, true God and true man, whole and undivided, in His glorified humanity ; and, at the same time, we must have a deep feeling of what is due to Him from us. We must, moreover, discern plainly what is the object of His coming. Why is it that He remains here in the midst of us? The Catechism says: "Christ has given Himself to us in this sacrament to be the life and food of our souls." "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." If we do not understand the need that we have of spiritual nourishment, we shall never hunger as we ought after this heavenly bread. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away" (St. Luke i. 53). We cannot be said truly and sufficiently to discern the Body of the Lord unless we also feel the need that we have of His Divine Sacrament for our food.

But how are we to "discern the Body of the Lord"? Not by understanding only. We must, indeed, diligently study all that the Church teaches, but we must also learn with our hearts. "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (St. Luke x. 21). It is by prayer and meditation that we can best discern the Body of the Lord. Fervent and humble prayer at the feet of Jesus in the tabernacle will teach us more of His Real Presence, of His greatness and goodness, and of our duties to Him, than we could learn anywhere else. Our Lord has given himself to us wholly and entirely in the Blessed Sacrament ; it should be our desire, in return, to give ourselves wholly to Him, in mind and in heart, in body and in soul.

I will conclude with some beautiful words of St. John Chrysostom, who was Patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century: "Dearly beloved, it behoveth us to learn the miracle of the mysteries—what the gift is, and why it was given, and what is the use thereof. 'We being many, are one body,' saith the apostle Paul (I. Cor. x. 17); and again, 'We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones' (Eph. v. 30). Only the initiated will now understand what I say: that this union may take place, not by love only, but, verily and indeed, we ought to mingle our own with His flesh. And this may be done by eating that food which He hath given unto us, being fain to manifest that exceeding great love which He beareth to us-ward. To this end He hath mingled Himself with us, and infused His Body into our bodies, that we may be one together, like as the limbs

of a man and his head are all of one body. Such union do they long for that love much.

"When we come back from that table we ought to be like so many lions breathing fire, dreadful to the devil. Our thoughts ought to be concentrated on our great Head, and the love which He showeth us. Many fathers and mothers there are who give their children to others to nurse; but I, saith the Lord to the children, I am not so, but I feed you with Mine own flesh, and join Myself to you, fain that ye should all be sons of noble blood now, and giving you a noble hope of that which ye shall be hereafter. I was content to be your Brother; I, for your sakes, have taken unto me flesh and blood, and that flesh and blood, wherein I am become your Brother, the same I give in turn unto you.

"Let us, then, dearly beloved brethren, take good heed to ourselves, as unto the holders of so great mercies, and when any foul word springeth to our lips, or we feel anger taking possession of us, or the sting of any other sinful passion, let us call to mind of what we have been counted worthy, and let that remembrance still the unruly motion. As often as we take that Body, as often as we taste that Blood, let us think how that we feed on Him who is sitting on high, adored of angels, at the right hand of the Eternal Power."

"Ah, me! how many a way is opened to us whereby we may be saved! He hath made us His, He hath given His Body to us, and still we are not turned away from evil!" *(Breviary Lesson—Marquis of Bute's Translation).*

SERMON LXXVIII.

Jesus our Guest.

"This day I must abide in thy house" (St. Luke xix. 5).

In the Holy Communion, my dear brethren, our Lord comes to us as a guest. He said to us, as He said to Zacheus, "I must abide in thy house," and He bids us prepare a place for Him within our hearts. Listen to the history of our Lord's visit to Zacheus. "And entering, He walked through Jericho. And behold there was a man named Zacheus, who was the chief of the Publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus, who He was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And, running before, he climbed up into a sycamore tree that he might see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when He was come to the place, looking up, He saw him, and said to him, Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him with joy. And when all saw it they murmured, saying that He was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. But Zacheus, standing, said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and, if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold. Jesus said to him, This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (St. Luke xix. 1).

We could not have a more beautiful illustration of the kind and loving intention of our Lord in visiting us in the Blessed Sacrament, and of the way in which we ought to prepare ourselves to receive Him.

It is a great work to prepare a house for the Lord of glory—a work which requires all the care and diligence that men can bring to it. King David desired to build a material house for God; let us take him as our example. He was full of the thought of it. "He swore to the Lord, he vowed a vow to the God of Jacob. If I shall enter into the tabernacle of my house: if I shall go up into the bed wherein I lie: if I shall give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, or rest to my temples, until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob" (Ps. cxxxi. 2); and he said to Nathan the prophet, "Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God is lodged within skins" (II. Kings vii. 2). When

he was forbidden to begin the work of building the Lord's house, he considered it an honour merely to get together the building materials for the use of his son, who was chosen to do the work he had himself longed to undertake. "The work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God, and I, with all my ability, have prepared the expenses for the house of my God. Gold for vessels of gold, and silver for vessels of silver . . . . onyx stones, and stones like alabaster, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble of Paros in great abundance" (I. Par. xxix. 1).

When King Solomon, his son, undertook the work, he said: "The house which I desire to build is great, for our God is great above all gods. Who, then, can be able to build Him a worthy house? If heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him, who am I that I should be able to build Him a house? But to this end only that incense may be burnt before Him" (II. Par. ii. 5). "And the house, when it was building, was built of stones hewed and made ready; so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house when it was in building." "And the house, before the oracle, was overlaid with most pure gold, and fastened on the plates with nails of gold. And there was nothing in the temple that was not covered with gold" (III. Kings vi. 7–21).

This material temple was not the house of God in the highest sense, but "to this end only, that incense may be burnt before Him;" and yet these holy men thought that no care, no riches that man could give, were too great for its preparation. What, then, ought to be the care which Christians should devote to the task of preparing themselves to become the temple of God, when the Lord of glory proposes to visit them with His real and true presence?

In the exhortation to the Corinthians, which I before quoted, St. Paul says: "But let a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice," and he concludes with the words: "But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." Our duty, then, when we would approach to the holy table, is first to "prove ourselves"—that is, to look more closely and carefully into our own lives and conduct than we are in the habit of doing. It is not as if we could ever, in reality, be worthy of the honour bestowed on us. When we have done our best, we are still "unprofitable servants," and may well say, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." Still, we are bound to make such preparation as human weakness will allow us to make.

"Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on the

wedding garment?" We may well fear to have these words addressed to us if we do not "prove ourselves," and prepare our souls, as we ought, when we are to receive the Holy Sacrament. Let us dwell, for a few moments, on the parable of the marriage feast, which seems to have our Lord's table specially in view. "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a King, who made a marriage for his son." We can fancy to ourselves the grandeur of this banquet, with its regal state, and costly dishes, with the splendid court that surrounded it, and everything that power and wealth could supply on so great an occasion. But "they that were invited were not worthy" and the King sent his servants into the highways to bring in "the poor and the feeble, the blind and the lame," to "compel them to come in, that his house might be filled."

But when "the King went in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith to him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the King said to the waiters, Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (St. Matt. xxii. 2).

We can imagine the confusion and dismay of the culprit who "had not on the wedding garment;" he "was silent"—he had no excuse to make, and the affront offered to his entertainer and Sovereign was manifest before all who sat at table with him. Such is the case with those who presume to partake of our Lord's heavenly banquet without having on the "wedding garment" of divine grace. They can have no excuse to give, for God has supplied them with this heavenly garment, shining with the Precious Blood of Christ, and it is through their own malice and negligence that they are not clothed in it.

The essential requisite for receiving the Holy Communion is to be free from mortal sin. Any one who knowingly and willingly receives in mortal sin is guilty of a terrible sacrilege, and offers the greatest insult and outrage to our Lord that can well be imagined. This is obvious; the very essence of mortal sin is to be a rebellion against God, and its effect is completely to take away the life of supernatural grace which has been given to the soul, and to leave it stained with guilt, odious and abominable in the sight of God. That a man knowing himself to be in such a state—knowing that he has turned against Christ and betrayed Him—that he is impure and defiled in the eyes of God, should, nevertheless, dare to receive within himself the "Lamb without spot"—this is, indeed, an outrage which can be compared to nothing but the treacherous kiss of Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane.

What a horrible traitor is he who goes to the altar of God, and enters into the "Holy of Holies," taking his place amongst the servants of God, in the sight of the holy angels, with reverence on his lips and treason in his heart, striking his breast in outward adoration, and, at the same moment, mortally offending and insulting the Lord whom he professes to adore! "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" "Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Why comest thou to "eat and drink judgment to thyself?" These are the words which our Lord seems to address to the unworthy communicant.

If a man discovers that he is in mortal sin, he is bound to have recourse to the sacrament of Penance before he can presume to approach to the holy table. It is not enough for him to repent of his sin. It is true, indeed, that perfect contrition—that is, a true sorrow for sin arising from the love of God—will obtain pardon even before receiving the sacrament, since divine charity is not consistent with mortal sin; but this is not a sufficient preparation for Communion. Out of reverence for the Holy Sacrament the stain of sin must be washed away in the special laver of sanctification provided by our Lord, and no one, except in case of extreme necessity, may venture to receive Holy Communion without making use of it. In the Old Law God commanded a great laver — a "molten sea," as it was called—to be made, in which those entering into the holy place might wash and be cleansed from their impurities. The sacrament of Penance is the great laver provided for us, in which we must wash before we presume to enter the Christian Holy of Holies — the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

But here let us ask, Why do we make this great distinction between mortal and venial sin? Is it enough to be free from mortal sin when we approach to the Holy Communion? No, my dear brethren; it is not enough. We ought to make every exertion to purify ourselves from even the smallest stain when we would receive our Lord.

"He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy let him be sanctified still" (Apoc. xxii. 11); and even the most perfect of the saints may well strive for higher sanctity before entering into that great presence.

Every unrepented sin disfigures the soul, and diminishes the grace which our Lord gives us in the Holy Eucharist; but mortal sin alone makes him absolutely unfit to receive the Blessed Sacrament. So long as a man wilfully remains in mortal sin he is incapable of receiving sanctifying grace, and the sacraments are for him only a mockery; whereas all the sacra-

ments are themselves a means for washing away lesser sins from those already in a state of grace.

The very idea of mortal sin is that it is a sin committed wilfully and with complete deliberation, so that, ordinarily speaking, people cannot fail to remember the grievous sins that they have committed; whereas venial sin is very often the result of weakness: it comes from surprise, or want of thought, or is in some way a less complete action than mortal sin, and one of which we are often not fully conscious.

With the utmost care men cannot altogether avoid venial sin. If we were commanded to abstain from Holy Communion till we could venture to say that we were free from every sin, we should never venture to receive. Our Lord meant the Holy Eucharist for imperfect and sinful men, and not for the perfect only. He meant it to support supernatural life, and to heal spiritual infirmities; so He does not require of us, as a preparation, a greater degree of sanctity than sinful men can easily obtain.

The prophet says: "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord" (Is. lii. 11); and it is clear that the first preparation for receiving our Blessed Lord must be the most perfect purification of our souls that we are able to effect; for "what fellowship hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (II. Cor. vi. 14). Purity of soul, however, includes several things, of which it will be well to speak in detail. The first thing, evidently, is purity of conscience. We must strive earnestly to wash away the stain of every sin actually committed by repenting not only of great sins, but of everything, however small, by which we may have offended God. There are many faults which are trifling in themselves, which, nevertheless, sully the soul's purity, and are like the dust which imperceptibly settles upon every object, and spoils its beauty, if allowed to remain. Such faults as these, again, may be compared to a cloud which comes between God and our souls; they hinder the rays of God's light from falling in their brightness upon our souls, and prevents us from seeing Him as clearly as we should. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." The more carefully, therefore, we cleanse our consciences, the more clearly shall we see God.

In addition to purity of conscience, we should aim at purity of will—that is, we should desire to conform our wills to the will of God. To be perfect, we must will what He wills, and aim at the perfection He requires of us; and we should at least desire to sacrifice everything which is contrary to divine will. There are many people who try to purify their consciences, by repenting of

the sins by which they have been actually stained; but they do not go deep enough, and do not try to make themselves men, "according to God's own heart," by conforming themselves in all things to God's will. On the contrary, they allow all sorts of perverse wills to remain unchecked within them, and, in little things, they set up their own inclinations as idols in opposition to the will of God.

It is the same thing with the affections. "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (St. Matt. vi. 21). You cannot really give your heart to God unless you make some effort to take off your affections from all things which are displeasing to Him. Even after repenting of our sins, our affections and longings cling to the creatures which have led us astray—to the vanities and pleasures and allurements of every kind which the tempter presents to us. "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God" (St. James iv. 4). When we are to receive from our Lord the greatest of all acts of friendship, we should, at least, try to break off from all His enemies. It is not enough to repent of the sins which are the fruit, but we must endeavour to correct the perverse wills and inclinations and desires which are the roots from which sinful actions spring. And who can give you this great purity? Who can take away the stains from the conscience, and thus regulate the affections and the will? No one but our Lord Himself can do this. See Jesus at His last supper, as He washes His Apostles' feet! "He cometh, therefore, to Simon Peter, and Peter saith to Him, 'Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?' Jesus answered, and said to Him, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' Peter saith to Him, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part in Me.' Simon Peter saith to Him, 'Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head" (St. John xiii. 6).

When we are to receive the Holy Communion our Lord seems to say to us, as He said to St. Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part in Me." It is His grace alone which can wash our souls, and restore to them once again the white garment we received in Baptism. It is His grace which must ornament our souls, so as to make them fitting tabernacles in which He may abide. The special means by which this purifying grace is bestowed is the sacrament of Penance. The Prophet Zacharias says: "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner" (Zach. xiii. 1); and, in the Church of God, this fountain is the sacrament of Penance.

There are many other ways in which venial sin, and sometimes mortal sin also, may be forgiven, and therefore we are urged to multiply our acts of contrition and aspirations of love before Holy Communion; but the great means of purification appointed by God is the sacrament of Penance, and to this those who are conscious of mortal sin are always bound to have recourse.

I must, however, consider, a little more exactly, what is the obligation of going to confession before Communion. It is not quite enough to say that all who are in mortal sin are bound to confess their sins before receiving the Holy Eucharist; because, as we all know, it is the general rule amongst Catholics to use confession as a preparation for Communion. If we were contented with ourselves, and supposed that we needed no special purification when we were to receive our Lord, it would show that we had a very exalted opinion of the habitual holiness of our lives, or else a very unworthy idea of the greatness of the guest who was to visit us. Even the holiest and most perfect of men needs to be washed, again and again, before he can venture to receive the All Holy Lord of heaven and earth; and it is a small thing to expect that Christians should make a preparation for His coming by the humble confession of their sins, and by receiving the purifying grace of the sacrament of Penance. Under any ordinary circumstances, therefore, for any one to receive Holy Communion without previous confession, would be an act of great presumption, quite opposed to the custom of the Catholic Church.

To this, however, there is a limitation in practice. It would never do to allow too ceremonious a preparation to prevent the faithful from receiving our Lord frequently in the Holy Communion, and, therefore, confession is not necessary every time you receive, when your Communions are frequent. For example, priests and religious, and devout people who communicate every day, or several times in the week, are not obliged to go to confession before each Communion; but it is enough if they receive the sacrament of Penance with reasonable frequency. If any one has the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, he must always go to confession before he ventures to communicate, but, otherwise, confession is not necessary before each Communion, under these circumstances. At the same time, if we look into the lives of the saints, I think we shall find that their anxiety was to confess their sins as often as possible; sometimes, even every day, because they felt that no pains and diligence could be too great to purify themselves for the coming of so great a guest.

But purification is not enough. When an honoured guest comes to visit you, you are not contented with cleanliness: you

want to put before him everything precious that your means will allow. When a Sovereign visits the dwellings of his subjects, and passes through their streets, how great is the anxiety to prepare the way by which he is to pass—everything offensive or unsightly must be removed, and everything beautiful and precious is brought out to welcome him. You see triumphant arches raised in every street, and words of welcome inscribed on almost every house. This is the way in which men greet their Kings and Queens, and we may learn from them when we are preparing a place for the Lord of Glory. If they seek for material decorations, ought not we, much more, to look out for those spiritual ornaments which may make us acceptable in the sight of our Lord and King!

"And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, like a bride adorned for her husband" (Apoc. xxi. 2). And St. John describes the glory and beauty of that holy city, with its jasper walls and its foundations adorned with precious stones. Would that we could imitate the splendour of this New Jerusalem when the Spouse of our souls comes to visit us. The gold and precious stones which He asks of us are not the perishable things that men covet, but acts of virtue and piety done in His honour—they are loving affections and generous resolves, and, above all, the resolute will to serve Him.

"If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and the Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make our abode with Him" (St. John xiv. 23). Our Lord Himself tells us how we are to make our hearts a fit dwelling-place for Him.

Three dispositions, however, there are, which we need in a special way. "Whence is it to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me" (St. Luke i. 43). These were the words with which St. Elizabeth saluted our Blessed Lady at the Visitation. Should not we, then, be overwhelmed with the honour which our Lord pays us by His visit? "Whence is it to me that the Lord of glory, the King of heaven and earth, should come to visit me? No matter what we may be in body or soul; no matter what we have done for God, or how exalted we may be in the estimation of men, it is still a marvellous and most undeserved honour. "He that made me rested in my tabernacle" (Ecclus. xxiv. 12).

Besides receiving our Lord with humility, we must be generous with Him. See what Zaccheus did when our Lord became His guest. "He made haste and came down, and received Him with joy. . . . . And Zacheus, standing, said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor,

and, if I have wronged any man of any thing, I restore him fourfold. Jesus said to him, This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham" (St. Luke xix. 6). This is an example of the generosity with which we should treat our Divine Guest; and, if we were to display our generosity as Zacheus did, we, too, should hear the words: "This day is salvation come to this house."

Again, what do most men offer Him besides words? We are all conscious of many things we might offer if we had a little good-will; sometimes these things are pet follies which we might give up; sometimes they are little exertions which we ought to make, but have not the courage to attempt; sometimes a little more generosity in money matters is wanted of us, as it was with Zacheus; sometimes God needs a little more of our time and thought. Have you not, my dear brethren, some rich sacrifice to make to God, which you might offer to our Lord when He comes to visit you? At least, you have the sacrifice of your heart, which He will not refuse.

Our Lord Himself gives us a picture of the grudging hospitality too frequently offered in His words to Simon the Pharisee about St. Mary Magdalen: "Dost thou see this woman? I entered thy house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she, with tears, hath washed My feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee, Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much" (St. Luke vii. 44).

I will conclude with some beautiful words from St. John Chrysostom on the dispositions for receiving the Holy Communion: "To this table of the Lord let none dare to draw near with squeamishness or carelessness. Let all be fiery, all hot, all roused. To the Jews it was commanded touching the Paschal Lamb, 'and thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.' But thou needest to be more watchful than they. They were about to travel from Egypt to Palestine, and, therefore, they bore the guise of travellers; but the journey that lieth before thee is the journey from earth to heaven, And, therefore, it behoveth thee in all things to be on thy guard, for the punishment of him that eateth and drinketh unworthily is no light one.

"Bethink thee how thou art indignant against him which betrayed, and them that crucified the Lord; and look to it

well that thou also be not 'guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.' As for them, they slew His most Holy Body; but thou, after all He hath done for thee, dost thrust Him into thy polluted soul. For His love it was not enough to be made man, to be buffeted, and to be crucified; He hath also mingled Himself with us, by making us His Body, and that, not by faith only, but verily and indeed.

"Can anything be purer than that man ought to be who eateth of this great Sacrifice? Can sunbeam be clearer than that hand ought to be which breaketh this Flesh?—that mouth which is filled with that spiritual fire?—that tongue which is reddened by that Blood? Awful, exceedingly! That, whereon the angels quail to look, neither dare to gaze steadfastly upon It, because of the blinding glory which shineth therefrom: upon This we feed, with This we become one, and are made one Body of Christ, and one Flesh" *(Breviary Lesson—Marquis of Bute's Translation).*

SERMON LXXIX.

Holy Eucharist in Scripture.

"Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed" (St. John xx. 29).

In preparing for the Holy Communion, my dear brethren, it is very important to have a familiar knowledge of the words of Holy Scripture bearing upon this great mystery. If we are, before all things, to "discern the Body of the Lord," we can do nothing better than ponder on the very words of that good Lord Himself, as they are recorded for us. No explanations or exhortations of men can be like the words of God, as dictated by the Holy Spirit.

It is not as if we wanted proof of the doctrine which the Catholic Church teaches us; she is her own proof, and in this, and in all other things, the faith rests on her teaching and authority. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations," "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature . . . . and they going forth, preached everywhere: the Lord working withal and confirming the word with signs that followed" (St. Mark xvi. 15). They went forth into the world strong in the commission granted to them, without needing any books to confirm their teaching. The inspired words which we now read had not yet been written; but the Apostles taught, and their doctrine rested only on the authority they had received from our Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way, the teaching of the Catholic Church, at this day, as in all ages, rests solely on the teaching authority which it inherits from the Apostles. Still, the words of the Holy Scripture—the very accents of our Lord Himself—are our consolation and encouragement, and we cannot meditate upon them too frequently.

I will first speak of those passages which directly tell us of the Holy Eucharist, and we may have an opportunity at another time to consider some of the types and figures by which the Holy Sacrament was anticipated in the Old Testament. The words of our Lord are familiar to us all, as we have heard them from our childhood; but there are, perhaps, a good many who do not exactly know in what order they are to be taken, and in what part of the Holy Scripture they are to be found.

There are three occasions on which the Blessed Sacrament is

especially referred to. These are the promise, the accomplishment of the promise, and the working out of the promise in the practice of the Church. The mutual dependence of these passages immensely adds to the weight which the words would have in themselves; they explain one another in such a manner as to take away the possibility of misunderstanding.

The promise is related to us in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and it comes in a very remarkable place. The Evangelist tells us of the miracle in which Jesus fed the five thousand. who had followed Him into the desert, with five barley loaves and two fishes, and then speaks almost immediately of the promise which Jesus gave of the Holy Eucharist, in which He was to multiply Himself to be the food of all men.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink, indeed; he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever. These things He said teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum. Many, therefore, of His disciples hearing it, said, This saying is hard, and who can hear it? . . . After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve, Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God" (St. John vi. 48).

Here we have a most distinct promise made to us by our Lord, and made solemnly and publicly before the people—He would give us His flesh and blood for our food. He repeats this promise, and insists upon it, in different forms, again and again. "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I

in him." His words were, moreover, understood by everybody to be plain and literal; friends and enemies alike understood Him to make a great and marvellous promise, though neither of them could understand how he could possibly fulfil it.

His enemies asked, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" and even some of His disciples murmured, and said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" and "after this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him," and our Lord let them go. His faithful friends could not understand how His promise was to be fulfilled any more than the others; but they trusted Him, and waited. "Will you also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The time had not come for our Lord to explain to men the way in which his gracious promise was to be fulfilled, and it was their duty to believe His word, even though it seemed hard, and they could not understand it.

St. Augustine on this says: "Many, therefore, not of His enemies, but of His disciples, hearing this, said, This is a hard saying, and who can hear it? If His disciples found this saying hard, how did His enemies take it? And, nevertheless, He must so speak as not to be understood by all. God's secret ought to make us intent, and not hostile; but these men quickly fell away when our Lord Jesus Christ spoke in this manner."

A promise like that given by our Lord makes us look out anxiously for a corresponding performance, and we naturally expect that the fulfilment will be something which, in solemnity and importance, comes up to the expectations raised by the words of the promise. If we find the promise and the performance correspond, they strengthen each other, and show us conclusively that we have not been misunderstanding our Lord's words. Let us, then, see how Jesus fulfilled His promise. It was the most solemn moment in His mortal life. It was the hour when the shadow of His cross was upon Him, and He had called His Apostles around Him expressly to speak His last words, and to leave them His last legacy.

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer:" it was this last Paschal supper that He chose as the fitting occasion for carrying out the promise He had made to His disciples.

It is remarkable that we do not read of the fulfilment in the Gospel which contains the promise, but we find it related by the three other Evangelists. St. Matthew tells us what our Lord did in these words: "And whilst they were at supper Jesus took bread and blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples, and said, Take ye, and eat: this is My Body. And, taking the chalice,

He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of this: for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (St. Matt. xxvi. 26). St. Mark gives us the history in very similar words: "And whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessing, broke and gave to them, and said, Take ye, this is My Body. And, having taken the chalice, giving thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it, and He said to them, This is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many" (St. Mark xiv. 22).

St. Luke says: "And, taking bread, He gave thanks, and broke and gave to them, saying, This is My Body, which is given for you: do this for a commemoration of Me. In like manner, the chalice also, after He had supped, saying, This is the chalice, the New Testament in My Blood, which shall be shed for you" (St. Luke xxii. 19).

Here we have an accurate account of the fulfilment of our Lord's promise. In His wisdom and His power He found out a way in which, exactly and precisely, to carry out what He had promised by making Himself our food, and, at the same time, to avoid those apparently insuperable difficulties which presented themselves to the imagination by hiding His Most Precious Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine.

But we want to hear a little more of the Divine Sacrament then instituted. It was not a mere passing form of words, but a great fact, a mighty and persistent presence which has come into the world, and which has to take a tangible shape amongst men. It is a doctrine which has to be taught throughout the world, and must carry with it the most distinct and unmistakable consequences. Let us look on, then, for twenty or thirty years, and see the place which this doctrine has taken amongst men. The Apostles have gone forth on their mission, thousands of the heathen have been brought into the fold of Christ, and churches are being established on all sides.

St. Paul tells us, in the passage we have already had occasion to quote, how our Lord's words have been understood and reduced to practice during the years that have passed since they were spoken. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and, giving thanks, broke, and said, Take ye and eat; this is My Body which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying, This chalice is the New Testament in My Blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice you shall show

the death of the Lord until He comes. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread and drink of the chalice; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord. Therefore there are many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep; but, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (I. Cor. xi. 23).

What gives these words their particular cogency is that they are not speculative, but practical; they were called for by the necessities of daily life. The Christians had from the beginning been taught to meet together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and it was necessary, by very plain and practical teaching, to provide against the abuses which are sure to creep into all things that are a matter of routine. St. Paul, therefore, emphatically repeats, in our Lord's own words, the doctrine which they had received, and solemnly draws the conclusion which must necessarily follow from that doctrine: "Let a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord."

In the same Epistle St. Paul makes another reference to the Holy Eucharist. He says: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread. Behold Israel, according to the flesh: are not they who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What, then? Do I say that what is offered in sacrifice is anything? or that the idol is anything? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils; you cannot drink of the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils: you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils" (I. Cor. x. 16).

In these words the Apostle alludes to the practice of receiving the Holy Eucharist, and to the faith of Christians concerning it, and uses it as an argument to persuade them to keep clear of the heathenish rites around them—those who are "partakers of the Body of Christ must not be partakers with devils." Nothing can illustrate the faith of the early Christians better than such an allusion as this. This passage brings before us, moreover, the Blessed Sacrament as our great bond of union. It is called the Holy Communion, because it unites all the members of the

Church into one body, inasmuch as they are all supported by one heavenly food. "We, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread."

This is the way in which St. Paul understood and taught our Lord's doctrine, after an interval of thirty years, when the Church was first established. But let us go on for another period and see how the pastors of the Church speak after four hundred years, when the stress of persecution has been removed, and peace has been restored. St. Ambrose was the Archbishop of Milan towards the end of the fourth century, and was one of the great lights of the Church; let us hear what he says: It is a marvellous thing that God rained down manna for the fathers, and that they were fed with daily food from heaven. Whence it is said *men eat the bread of angels.* And yet all who eat that bread died in the desert. But this food which thou receivest—this Living Bread that cometh down from heaven—supplies us with the substance of eternal life; and whosoever shall eat this Living Bread shall never die; and it is the Body of Christ. Consider, now, whether the bread of angels be more excellent, or Christ's flesh, which is, in truth, the body of life. That manna came down from heaven, this is above heaven; that was of heaven, this is of the Lord of heaven; that was liable to corruption if preserved to another day, this is free from all corruption, and whosoever religiously tastes it, cannot feel corruption." "For this sacrament which thou receivest is effected by the word of Christ. Now, if the word of Elias so availed as to draw down fire from heaven, shall not the word of Christ be of avail to change the natures of the elements? Concerning the works of the whole world, you have read that, *He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.* The word, therefore, of Christ which could, out of nothing, make that which was not, cannot it change those things which are into that which they were not?" "The Lord Jesus Himself cries out, *This is My Body.* Before the benediction of heavenly words another species is named; after the consecration, His body is signified, Himself declares it His own Blood. Before the consecration it is called another thing; after consecration it is called blood. And thou sayest, Amen—that is, it is true. What the mouth speaks let the inward mind confess; what language expresses, let thought feel."

I will give you one other extract. St. John Chrysostom was Patriarch of Constantinople about the same time that St. Ambrose was a Bishop in the Western Church, and he is alluding to the history of the poor woman having an issue of

blood. She came behind our Lord and touched the hem of His garment, "for she said within herself, If I shall only touch His garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour" (St. Matt. ix. 21). St. Chrysostom applies this to the Holy Eucharist, and says: "Let us also touch the hem of His garment; yea, rather, if we will, we have Him entire. For, indeed, even His Body is set before us now; not His garment only, but even His Body; not so that we may touch it only, but so even that we may eat and be filled. Therefore, let us approach with faith each one that has an infirmity. For, if they who touched the hem of His garment drew from him so much virtue, how much more they who possess him entire? But to approach with faith is not merely to receive what lies to open view, but also to touch with a clean heart, to be so disposed as coming to Christ Himself. For what if thou hear no voice? But thou seest Him before thee; yea, rather, thou also hearest His voice, whilst He is speaking through the Evangelists. Believe ye, therefore, that even now it is that supper whereat Himself reclined. For in nothing does that differ from this. For neither did man make this and Himself that, but Himself makes both this and that. When, therefore, thou beholdest the priest distributing to thee, do not account that it is the priest that does this, but that it is the hand of Christ that is stretched out. He that hath given thee the greater thing—that is, hath set Himself before thee—much more will He not disdain also to distribute to thee that body. Let us, then, both priests and subjects, hear what has been vouchsafed to us; let us hear and tremble. He has given us to be filled with His holy flesh; He has set Himself before us sacrificed. Wherefore, what excuse will there be for us, when feeding on such things, if we sin in such ways?" *(Faith of Catholics, Vol. II., pp.* 294, 297, 298, 313).

We see, then, my dear brethren, how faithfully these great doctors of the Church, like St. Paul, hand on, and enforce the doctrine of our Lord about the Holy Eucharist. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you." After four hundred years the teaching of "that night in which He was betrayed," so far from growing faint and dim, is only plainer and more fully expressed. One age after another takes up the song of thanksgiving, and East and West join in contributing their acknowledgments for the great gift bestowed upon men at that last supper. And so the Church, throughout her whole history down to our

own times, has gone on continually praising our Lord for the great sacrament of His love, and devising new ways of showing reverence and devotion towards it.

I will conclude these extracts from the writers of the early Church with a few practical words about the thanksgiving which we ought to make after Communion. This is a subject which requires a good deal of consideration. There are many people who hardly know how to make a proper thanksgiving after their Communions. They have not thought very much about what our Lord expects of them, or what it is becoming in them to offer; and, therefore, they give way to their natural restlessness, and hurry out of church at the first moment that they can do so. Have you not often, my dear brethren, seen people, and well-meaning people, too, who have received the Holy Communion at Mass, struggling in the crowd at the church door a few minutes after? As soon as the two or three short prayers which conclude the Mass are finished, they hurry out into the street, and begin talking to their friends, and set about the ordinary business of life. They have, perhaps, taken reasonable pains to prepare for Communion, and really intend to make a good Communion, but they have so little notion of what is due to our Lord, that they have literally nothing to say to Him, and, if we may say so, carry Him unceremoniously into the street as a neglected and despised guest.

Communicants who act in this manner have no right to expect much grace and blessing from the Lord who has visited them. "What shall I say to you? Do I praise you? In this I praise you not." These were the words which St. Paul addressed to those of the Corinthians who met in a disorderly way to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and I am afraid he would use the same words of those who are in so great a hurry after Communion. It will sometimes, of course, happen that people are obliged to go home at once; then they can, without any disrespect, make their thanksgiving as they go on their way, and our Lord will be with them as He was with the Disciples going to Emmaus; but there are very few who could not afford ten minutes or a quarter of an hour after the Mass is finished, if they wished to do so.

Now, let us consider the disrespect shown. If you were admitted to an audience of your Sovereign, and then, the moment you were in the presence chamber, almost at the very moment of being presented, you were to turn aside, and forget all about the place in which you were standing; if, for example, you at once began to amuse yourself, to talk and laugh as you would anywhere else, without regard to your Sovereign's pre-

sence, what would be thought of your conduct? Would not everybody say that you were grievously deficient in manners, if not in loyalty, and that you were quite unfit for such company? And yet this is just the way in which men treat our Lord, and it will be very well for us all, my brethren, if our consciences will allow us to say that we have never done anything like it.

Can we think that our Lord deserves or requires less deference than an earthly monarch? Will He, before whom the angels and archangels bow in adoration, be contented with a careless and indifferent reception? No, my dear brethren; He bears with us, indeed, because of our weakness of body and mind, but every slight, and carelessness, and rudeness which we show to Him in the sacrament of His love, is odious and painful to His Sacred Heart, and must, in some way or other, be atoned.

The first thing to do is to give proper time. It is in vain to think that you can make a suitable thanksgiving if you will not give time for composure and recollection. Why are you in such a hurry? You are not in a hurry when you are amusing yourselves; you think very little of an extra quarter of an hour if you are doing something that interests you. Men might suppose that we had something much more important to do, whereas these few minutes, well employed, may be our salvation.

"It is the part of man to prepare the soul" (Prov. xvi. 1). What is this preparation of soul? We can give ourselves the time and composure of mind which are needed for the approach of God's inspirations. This is particularly necessary after Communion. We must shut ourselves up, as it were, with our Lord Jesus, and let nothing whatever interrupt us for the time we think necessary and becoming. We must take care to get into a place where we shall not be distracted; to supply ourselves with books to help our devotions, and to give our time honestly, without one thought of what we are to do afterwards, so that we may not be longing to get our prayers done as soon as possible. If we prepare ourselves in this way, then the time after Communion will be a time of devotion, and not of hurry and distraction.

Devotion after Communion consists of three things—adoration thanksgiving, and petition, about all of which there is a great deal to be said. The first thing clearly must be to adore. What should we do if we were suddenly brought into the visible presence of Jesus in His glory? What *could* we do but fall down in humble adoration, as the Apostles did at the transfiguration, when "they fell upon their face, and were very much afraid"? So our first thought ought to be to humble ourselves

in the dust. "I will adore Thee devoutly, O hidden Deity . . . . to Thee my whole subjects itself." These are the feelings which we ought to pour out before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It would be well if we could excite within us a little of that enthusiastic adoration, of that fervour of loyalty with which, in heaven, angels cast their crowns at His feet, and saints on earth pour out their hearts before Him; but we are, most of us, too tame and too cold in our feelings.

"You ask and you receive not, because you ask amiss" (St. James iv. 3). We all mean to ask for something when we have our solemn interview with our Lord after Communion, but how many "ask amiss"? Our Lord says to us, as He said to the blind men, "What will ye that I do to you?" How little that is straightforward and earnest have we to say in reply! We may fancy our Lord using to us the words of Pilate during the Passion, "Speakest Thou not to me. Knowest Thou not that I have power to condemn Thee, and I have power to release Thee?" (St. John xix. 10).

His word is everlasting life; He holds the "keys of death and hell." All the graces which we can hope for are in His hands. Oh, then, let us use every moment of the time given to us in the Holy Communion to implore from Him the graces we so urgently need!

SERMON LXXX.

Preparation for Holy Communion.

"Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart" (Ps. ix. 38).

I MUST now speak a little more in detail about the preparation for Holy Communion. I have dwelt already on the most important part of this preparation—that is, on the purity of conscience, and the dispositions of soul which are necessary. There is, however, a good deal to be said about the immediate preparation which people should make when they are to receive the Blessed Sacrament.

In the first place, my dear brethren, we will consider the bodily preparation which the Church enjoins. The Catechism says: "In order to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily we must be in a state of grace; and we must also be fasting from midnight." The Church commands us to receive Communion *fasting*—that is, without having taken any food whatever since twelve o'clock the night before we receive. This rule may seem a strange one, at first sight, since our Lord instituted the Holy Sacrament, and gave His Apostles their first Communion, after His Last Supper. Our Lord did this manifestly in order to make the institution of the Holy Eucharist correspond with the time appointed for the Jews to eat the Paschal lamb—of which it was the fulfilment.

The Church's hymn to the Blessed Sacrament says: *Observata lege plene, cibis in legalibus, cibum turbæ duodenæ, se dat suis manibus.*

"He, the Paschal victim eating,
First fulfils the law's command,
Then as food to all His brethren
Gives Himself with His own hand."

The Old Law and the New had to meet at this mysterious feast: "This is the New Testament in My Blood;" and therefore it was that our Lord instituted the Holy Sacrament after His Apostles had partaken of the Paschal lamb, and the supper was concluded.

The usage of receiving at this time was soon changed, and for obvious reasons. The necessity had begun to make itself felt, even when St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "When you come, therefore, together into one place, it is not now to eat the Lord's

Supper. For each one taketh before his own supper to eat. And one, indeed, is hungry, and another is drunk. What, have you not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? Do I praise you? In this I praise you not" (I. Cor. xi. 20).

From these words we learn that, even amongst the fervent converts of the Apostles, it was impossible to associate the Holy Communion with ordinary eating and drinking without danger of great abuse, and the Church, in consequence, soon introduced the practice of fasting before receiving the Blessed Sacrament. As a general rule, men are better able to give their attention to spiritual things early in the day, and moreover, a feeling of reverence naturally suggests that we should let the Bread of Heaven, which our Lord gives, be the first food of which we partake each day.

The law which ordains this fast is a very strict one, and one which binds under pain of mortal sin; it may well be so, since it is a law made to secure the reverence due to the Body of our Lord, and the regulations which concern His honour must necessarily be a matter of importance. It has to be remembered that there are two kinds of fasting—the natural, and the ecclesiastical fast. The natural fast means abstaining entirely from any kind or description of food or drink; whereas the ecclesiastical fast is merely going without certain kinds of food, at certain times, according to the regulations laid down by the Church. The fast for Communion is the natural fast, from the first moment of the day on which we receive—that is, from the moment the clock strikes twelve at night, till after Communion.

You may not touch anything whatever by way of food or drink, however small in quantity, or, if you do so, you are bound to put off your Communion till another day. It is said, "by way of food," to guard against scrupulosity. In the ordinary process of life, as we breathe, and go from place to place, we may easily swallow something or other without the slightest idea of taking food—and scrupulous people sometimes fancy that such accidental things can keep them from Communion; but this is not the case; there is no necessity for any unusual care, it is only necessary that nothing should be taken *as food*. To give an example of this distinction, the rubric of the Missal distinctly says that if a drop of water be unintentionally swallowed in washing the mouth it does *not* prevent Communion—the reason of this is, that it is not then taken *as food*.

The law is, as I have said, very strict, so that any one who

knowingly received the Blessed Sacrament after breaking his fast would be guilty of a mortal sin, and, of course, make a sacrilegious Communion. No amount of personal inconvenience would authorize any one to disregard the law; so, for example, if a priest were, by forgetfulness, to break the fast, he must abstain from saying Mass, although considerable inconvenience should arise from his being unable to celebrate.

There are a few exceptions to this rule, and the principal one is when the Blessed Sacrament is received as Viaticum. Every Christian, who is in danger of death, is bound, if possible, to fortify himself for his end by receiving Holy Communion, and in that case the law of fasting does not bind. The Holy Sacrament is then called Viaticum, because it is received as the preparation for the last journey which man can take. "Viaticum" means the provision of food which men used to carry with them for their sustenance on a journey, and the name is most beautifully given to the Body of our Lord, when it is received to prepare us for the passage from this life to eternity. In danger of death, it is obviously, as a general rule, impossible for men to remain fasting for any considerable time, and therefore the law about fasting is not made to apply to those who are in that state.

There are a few other exceptions on which it is unnecessary to dwell, as they chiefly apply to priests. For instance, if a priest were taken ill in the course of Mass another priest must, if possible, complete the Sacrifice which has been begun, even if he be not fasting.

With regard to fasting before Communion, as, indeed, about other fasts, you sometimes hear people say, How can eating and drinking be a matter of religion? Am I worse in the sight of God because I have had my breakfast that I should be excluded from Communion? In making this objection they fail to see the point in question. It is not the food, but the disobedience, that makes them unworthy in the sight of God. In themselves, food or drink do not make people displeasing to God, and it is simply the law of the Church which prevents them from communicating; but, when this law is made and fully known, then comes in the crime of disobedience, and, my dear brethren, we cannot have too often before our eyes the words of Holy Scripture: "It is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey" (I. Kings xv. 23).

The conditions for receiving Holy Communion give us a good example of the difference between the laws of God and those of the Church. It is a sacrilege to receive in mortal sin, and unlawful to receive after you had broken your fast; but the two

things are quite different. The one is from the law of God, and no man could change it. No dispensation could possibly allow any one to receive Communion in mortal sin; he is absolutely unfit till he has repented of his sin. But the condition of fasting is one which the Church has made, and which it could, at any time, take away; so that, for instance, if a sufficient reason appeared, the Pope could grant a dispensation to any one to receive the Blessed Sacrament after taking food.

The care of the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's Body has been left by God to the Church, not to individuals. We cannot conceive that so great and venerable a sacrament could possibly have been left to the discretion of each Christian, without an authority appointed to settle the details of its administration and custody. Our Lord, indeed, sketches out, as it were, in a few words, the doctrine of His Real Presence; but there remain a thousand questions of faith and discipline to be settled before this doctrine could be brought into practical use, and nothing but a living authority is competent to arrange such details, and to make the necessary regulations for the care and reverence due to the Holy Sacrament.

It will be well to go over once more in detail what a good Christian should do by way of preparation for Communion. The first thing is the confession of your sins. It is the common practice of the faithful to go to confession, if possible, the night before Communion; or, at any rate, not to leave too long an interval between confession and Communion. In this confession we should have a strong desire to prepare a resting-place for our Lord within our hearts as pure and spotless as we can. "Cleanse, O Lord, my heart and my lips, as Thou didst those of Isaias the prophet." Ought not this to be our prayer when we are to receive our Lord?

Listen to the prophet's words: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and elevated: and His train filled the temple. Upon it stood the seraphim . . . . and they cried one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory. And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, Woe is me, because I have held my peace, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts. And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs off the altar. And he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed" (Isaias vi. 1).

We live in the midst of a people "of unclean lips," and how shall we venture near to the Holy of Holies—not to see the King, the Lord of Hosts, but actually to receive Him into our breasts? When we have been clothed again by the Lord with the garment of divine grace, "washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb," our care must be to keep it spotless. The great work of a Christian, at all times, as St. James tells us, is "to keep oneself unspotted from this world" (St. James i. 27); and before receiving Holy Communion we ought to be more than ordinarily anxious to do so.

There are many things which are right in themselves, which may, nevertheless, take off the freshness and brightness of that bridal attire in which we should wish to appear before our Lord in the Holy Communion. These it is well to avoid, as far as possible. The reverence due to our Lord seems almost to require that we should keep away from all those pursuits and amusements which involve great dissipation of mind for at least some hours before we receive the Holy Sacrament.

The Psalmist says: "If I have remembered Thee on my bed, I will meditate upon Thee in the morning" (Ps. lxii. 7). If, then, my brethren, you wish to be devout and recollected at Holy Communion in the morning, you must take the thought of our Lord with you as you lie down to rest. In the morning you must keep your thoughts for Him, as far as possible, free from earthly cares. Our Lord was laid in a "new sepulchre" in which "no man had been laid," and the holy women went there to anoint His body early in the morning. As we rise each day, our minds are, in a certain sense, new and fresh; and it will be well if we can offer them to our Lord before any of the ordinary thoughts of this life have taken possession of us.

"Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; and forget thy people, and thy father's house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty: for He is the Lord thy God, and Him they shall adore" (Ps. xliv. 11). You may fancy that these words are addressed to your soul, as you are preparing for Communion: "Forget thy people, and thy father's house"—forget all the ordinary affairs of life; lay aside, for a few moments, every temporal interest and concern, that you may enter into communion with our Lord, "for He is the Lord thy God, and Him they shall adore."

But what is to be the special and immediate preparation? Take care, in the first place, to be at Mass in good time—that is, some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour before the Mass actually begins. Is there anything, my dear brethren, which robs so many people of the graces which God meant to give them on

Sundays, as the habit of being late for Mass? People come in after the Mass has begun—at the Gospel, even later sometimes; they enter the church in a great hurry; they have no time to collect their thoughts, and the Mass is often half over before they have begun to consider how they are to hear it. It is not to be wondered at if they go away much as they came, having done very little to please God, or bring down His blessing. They have, *perhaps*, satisfied their obligation, but that is all. This way of hearing Mass certainly is no preparation for receiving Holy Communion.

You must secure yourself plenty of time, then, if it is possible; and, in general, with ordinary pains and forethought, you can get quite as much time as is necessary. And, now, what are the special thoughts which are suitable to the Mass at which you are to communicate? The first part of the Mass is preparation; the priest humbles himself for himself and his people, standing at the foot of the altar, and confessing his sins. "I will go unto the altar of God, to God who giveth joy to my youth." Let it be your thought, then, that you are preparing to go up to that altar as one about to partake of the sacrifice offered on it. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord. Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem" (Ps. cxxi. 1). As you kneel at the foot of that altar, are you not in the very courts of the tabernacle of the Lord? "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle?—or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice" (Ps. xiv. 1). "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent of hands and clean of heart" (Ps. xxiii 3). Humble yourself, then, with the priest at the foot of the altar, and strive after that cleanness of heart, that you may "stand in His holy place."

But the priest proceeds with the oblation. He offers up the bread and wine to God, that they "may become the Body and Blood of His most beloved Son Jesus Christ." He says: "Accept, O holy Father, Almighty, eternal God, this unspotted host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offences, and negligences, and for all here present: as also for all faithful Christians, both living and dead, that it may be profitable for my own and their salvation, unto eternal life. Amen."

And, now, what will you offer of your own, on the day of your Communion, to unite with this great sacrifice, which is being offered to God in your name? Is it not the time to make the most generous offering of yourself and all you have to our Lord? But now comes the bell for the *Sanctus*, as the priest,

at the conclusion of the Preface, recites the words: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, the heavens and earth are full of Thy glory: Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

These words usher in the Canon of the Mass—that solemn part in which is the Sacrifice. May we not feel as if the veil of the Temple was drawn back, and we were invited to come near, with the angels, to the great throne of God? They surround our altar and wait with us to do homage to their Lord, as He comes on earth. The bell rings again to tell us that the Consecration is at hand, and every head is bowed in readiness. "Come not nigh hither, and put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." These were the words which the Lord spoke to Moses when He "appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; and he saw that the bush was on fire and was not burned" (Exod. iii. 2). The Lord does not now command you not to come to Him; on the contrary, He calls upon you to approach, and you are about to be admitted to the most intimate union which a creature can have with his Creator; but, none the less must you remember the awful sanctity which surrounds Him. "Loose the shoes from thy feet"—bow down thy head in adoration, for in one moment the Lord thy God will have appeared on His altar; not as "a burning fire" to drive you away, but hidden in His sacramental presence, that you may be encouraged to approach.

And the bell sounds again, and you know that our Lord has come down upon the altar, under the guise of bread, and is lifted up in the priest's hands that you may adore Him. Can you fail to think of the words of Jesus: "If I shall be lifted up, I will draw all things to myself"? Once did our Lord fulfil this prophecy upon the cross; but He daily fulfils it in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. Let us pray that our hearts may be drawn to Him, especially when we are about to receive Him in His Holy Sacrament.

Our Lord comes once again on the altar, and again calls for your special and most loving adoration. That He may be on the altar as "the Lamb standing, as it were, slain," He completes the Sacrifice by being present under the two species of bread and wine. He is present wholly and entirely under each form, but the separate consecration is an essential part of this mysterious Sacrifice.

From the Consecration to the Communion our Lord remains lying upon the altar as our Sacrifice. He is there to be offered again to the Eternal Father for us, and to be charged, if we may say so, with all our commissions and wants, since our petitions

must be through him, and "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Eph. iii. 12). The Church solemnly presents her Sacrifice to God with these words: "We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, command these things to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty; that as many of us as by participation at this altar shall receive the Most Sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace."

During the Canon of the Mass the priest solemnly prays for the whole Catholic Church on earth, and especially for "all here present, whose faith and devotion are known unto Thee, for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee, this Sacrifice of praise for themselves, their families and friends, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their safety and salvation, and who pay their vows to Thee, the eternal, living, and true God."

Prayer is also made for all the faithful departed, and especially for our own friends, that God will grant to them "a place of refreshment, light, and peace;" and, finally, for ourselves, for "us sinners, Thy servants," who are "hoping in the multitude of Thy mercies." When you receive the Blessed Sacrament, you make the highest act of Communion—that is, by uniting yourself with our Lord, who is the head, you also unite yourself with all His members.

In Him you are united with the whole Catholic Church—with the saints reigning with Him in heaven, with the holy souls of the faithful, and with the whole Church militant throughout the earth. You may well, then, join very earnestly in these solemn prayers which are offered during the Canon for all the different parts of the Church, however far away, since "we being many are one head, one body, all who partake of one bread."

And now comes the part where the priest prepares himself for the Communion, which is the completion of the Sacrifice of the Mass. He is to receive our Lord under the two forms of bread and wine, because he has not only to partake of the Sacrifice, but must complete it by the Communion which mystically represents our Lord's death upon the cross. To prepare himself he adopts the tone and language of a child in his father's house. In the *Pater Noster* he addresses the Eternal Father with love and confidence; in our Lord's own words: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, give us this day our daily bread." Ask earnestly for this bread of your soul—"the bread of heaven, having in it everything that is delicious." Try now, at least, to hunger and thirst after the food that perishes not, and ask of your Heavenly Father grace so to

receive it, that "of a temporal gift it may become to you an eternal remedy."

As the priest makes his preparation you must make yours, and when the bell for the *Domine non sum dignus* announces that the priest is about to communicate, you go up to the altar-rails, that you may partake of the same sacrifice. You kneel at the altar-rails, and hold before you the Communion-cloth, that the Sacred Host may not by any accident fall on the ground. As you do so, should you not think to yourself that our Lord has taken upon Himself this humble form, and exposed Himself to a thousand affronts, simply to carry out his design of uniting Himself with men? It is all very well for us to take precautions, and do the best we can to secure Him against insult; but how very little is all that we can possibly do! As you take that Communion-cloth, beg of our Lord to preserve His Precious Body and Blood from all irreverence, by His own power, since His creatures can, at the best, do so little.

The Confiteor is recited: "I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever a Virgin," and to all the Court of heaven. You acknowledge before angels and men—before those whom Jesus said should "sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"—that you are a sinner, and unworthy of the great gift to be bestowed upon you. You have done, it is true, all that you can to prepare yourself for that great Presence, but still you cannot but acknowledge yourself to be a sinner, and that you have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed." You may well, then, renew your sorrow for all the offences and negligences and unworthiness of your former life, whilst the priest pronounces the prayers, *Misereatur tui*, and *Indulgentiam*, *absolutionem*, etc." You must not, however, then think over past sins in particular, as that could only lead to scrupulosity. When once you have gone up to receive Communion, no matter what faults there may have been in your preparation, you must go on, and receive as well as you can. Even if you should fancy that you have made your confession insufficiently, or broken your fast, you would not be bound to retire from the Communion-rails, as that might easily give scandal to others: the best course would be to make an act of contrition in your own mind, and receive the Holy Communion as fervently as possible.

The priest now turns to you, holding in his hands the Blessed Sacrament, with these words: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." How great would be our fervour if, with St. John, we could see the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit "as a dove descending and remaining

on Him," and could hear the voice from heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased."

Three times over does the priest repeat the words: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word, and my soul shall be healed." You have made the best preparation that you could, but at the end you must acknowledge yourself infinitely unworthy of the great grace offered to you. The greatest of the saints could not deem himself worthy of a visit from the Lord of glory; and you must earnestly and sincerely confess your own unworthiness. Our weakness and sinfulness, indeed, are the very best ground for confidence, since it was for sinners that He died, and for sinners that He left the Communion of His Body and Blood.

And to each in turn does the priest bring the Body of the Lord, with the words: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul to life everlasting," and with this solemn sentence you receive your Lord. "To life everlasting," that "He may raise you up at the last day." Oh, Christian soul, bow down humbly before your Lord in profound adoration; think that you have Him who will one day come to be your Judge. You can never be nearer to Him until that day comes when you have gone forth from the body, and see Him face to face; but He has not come now to judge, but to save you. "He came unto His own;" you belong to Him body and soul; He made you and redeemed you, and gave you everything you have, and now it is for you to make some return of thankfulness for all His many blessings. He comes with His hands full of graces, with pearls and jewels and precious things that this world cannot give, and it is your own fault if He does not bestow them upon you in abundance.

SERMON LXXXI.

The Eucharistic Sacrifice.

"Bring sacrifices, and come into His courts; adore ye the Lord in His holy court" (Ps. xcv. 9).

THE end of all creatures is to give glory to the Lord who made them. Willingly or unwillingly, in some way or another, every creature must do this. The unreasoning things in nature do this by the necessity of their being. "By Thy ordinance the day goes on; for all things serve Thee" (Ps. cxviii. 91). "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all ye deeps. Fire and hail, snow and ice, and stormy winds, which fulfil His word" (cxlviii. 7). It is reserved, however, for His intelligent creatures to give glory to Him willingly and joyously, and to offer to Him their "reasonable service." "All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify Thy name, for Thou art great, and dost wondrous things. Thou art God alone" (Ps. lxxxv. 9).

To enable us to do this in the best possible manner, our Lord has instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice, that men may have something higher and more perfect to present to their Creator than their own prayers and praises.

I must now, my dear brethren, speak of the Blessed Eucharist as a sacrifice, although it may be necessary to repeat a good deal of what I have said on other occasions.

From the very beginning, man began the worship of sacrifice, and when the human race was driven forth from the Garden of Eden, the children of Adam offered their sacrifices to God. Cain and Abel offered the first fruits of their toil to be consumed in sacrifice before the Lord; and when the dry land appeared once more after the deluge, the first idea of the Patriarch Noe was to build an altar to God, and offer to Him of the living things that had been preserved from destruction. And so sacrifice went on in all ages, till our Lord came amongst those who had preserved the knowledge of the true God; and even those who had forgotten Him, either by the remains of original tradition, or by an instinct of their nature, continued to offer sacrifice to the false gods whom they worshipped in His place.

Men knew but little of the true meaning of the sacrifices they offered, or what it was that gave them their value. They were, indeed, "showing forth the death of the Lord until He come"

at His first coming, as we are to show forth His passion and death until He comes again in His glory.

The Son of God was to be the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," and He was slain in the sacrifices which were offered as figures of Him. Every sacrifice which was acceptable to God derived its value from the sacrifice which our Lord was to offer, since every sacrifice made His death present in a certain sense, and profitable to those who offered it.

But when Christ had come, and as the "High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands—that is, not of this creation—neither by the blood of goats, nor of calves, but by His own Blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 11); a more perfect way was given to men in which His Sacrifice should be continued and made present to the human race, and this was the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is called the Eucharist Sacrifice—that is, the "Sacrifice of thanksgiving," because its first and greatest object is to pay to Almighty God that tribute of praise and thanksgiving which is due to Him from all His creatures.

In the Old Law sacrifices were offered for many objects. We read of holocausts, or whole-burnt offerings—of peace offerings, of sin offerings, and of morning and evening sacrifices. In place of all these different sacrifices we have the one Sacrifice, which is the fulfilment of them all. The Catechism tells us that "the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered for four ends—first, to give supreme honour and glory to God; secondly, to thank Him for all His benefits; thirdly, to obtain pardon for our sins; and, fourthly, to obtain all graces and blessings through Jesus Christ."

And, now, let us ask more exactly what is sacrifice? A sacrifice is offering or presenting to Almighty God, as a token of homage, some creature which is to be consumed or poured out, or in some way spent, or changed, in His service. This offering is made as an acknowledgment that He is the Giver of all things, from whom "every best gift and every perfect gift" comes down (St. James i. 17); and also that He is the Supreme Lord and Master of life and death. "I will kill and I will make to live; I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

In the Law of Moses the living things sacrificed were slain, and the flesh, wholly or in part, burned, and the blood poured out and sprinkled around the altar; the incense was burned and the oil consumed before the holy place, and the loaves of propitiation were placed every week fresh before the sanctuary. Everything offered in sacrifice was in some way dedicated to

God, and changed so as to be removed from the ordinary uses of life.

Let us see how this applies to the Sacrifice of the Mass. In the first place, the matter of the sacrament is bread made of wheat, and wine of the grape. The usage and regulation of the Western Church, as I have before explained, is that the bread should be unleavened—that is, made without any yeast, and made in the shape of a wafer. This is, however, only a matter of regulation, as any kind of wheaten bread would be valid matter to be consecrated. In parts of the East, on the contrary, *leavened* bread is used, with the sanction of the Church, and every priest is bound to follow the usage of the rite in which he is ordained.

The *essence* of the Sacrifice of the Mass is generally considered to be in the consecration alone, although some consider that the Communion also is essential. By the consecration our Lord becomes present on the altar, in a new and changed form, as a Sacrifice. Our Lord lays aside His glory, and assumes this lowly garb, in order to become our offering to God, and thereby to renew the Sacrifice of the Cross, in which He was actually slain, and His Blood poured out.

The Catechism tells us that "the Holy Mass is one and the same sacrifice with that of the cross, because Christ, who offered Himself a bleeding Victim to His Heavenly Father on the cross, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner on the altar, through the ministry of His priests." It is a repetition of the Sacrifice of Mount Calvary, and not a new sacrifice; it is the same, because our Lord Himself is always both the real Priest and the Victim, and the difference is in the instruments by whom He acts and the manner of oblation—that is, that, although His Blood is really present, it is not visibly poured out.

There cannot be any Sacrifice of the Mass without a fresh consecration, since the consecration is the essence of the sacrifice, so that the Church Office on Good Friday, which is called the Mass of the Presanctified, is not really a Mass, as there is no new consecration. And, again, there cannot be any consecration without any act of sacrifice; if a priest consecrates validly, he must also, of necessity (according to the common opinion), offer sacrifice, however informal the celebration may be.

For the completion of the Sacrifice—if not for its essence—it is necessary that the consecration should be under both species, under the forms of both bread and wine, as it is this double consecration which most vividly represents His mystical death. It is true that under each form our Lord is whole and undivided; His Body and Blood, His Soul and His Divinity, since "Christ

rising from the dead, dieth now no more;" but still, by the consecration in two forms, the separation of the Body and Blood is mystically accomplished.

The Communion, also, is necessary for the completion of the Sacrifice. The priest who has consecrated must also receive the Blessed Sacrament under both kinds to carry out the destruction, or consummation, of the Victim, which belongs to the idea of Sacrifice. For this reason the Catholic Church makes every effort to secure the completion of the Sacrifice, and every regulation gives way to it. If, for instance, a priest were to die, or to be taken ill, after the Consecration, some other priest must, if possible, be found to continue the Mass and receive the Holy Communion, and he must do so whether fasting or not.

At the Mass the priest consecrates enough of the bread to suffice for his own Communion, and for such of the faithful as may wish to receive, and if any of the sacred species remains over after the Communion of the laity he consumes it himself, unless it is necessary to reserve the Blessed Sacrament and to place it in the tabernacle for Communion and Benediction. In that case, the priest consumes the Sacred Host, as occasion may require, at another Mass, when the Sacrifice has been completed.

The Holy Mass is the great work of devotion by which we are to sanctify the Sunday, and is also one of the principal means of divine grace granted to us; it is, therefore, very necessary for all Christians to understand how to assist at it in the most profitable manner. The Holy Mass is not merely a form of prayer, but a great action, and all those who are present have, in a certain sense, to take part in what is done. A Sacrifice is offered to God, and those who assist are not mere spectators, but actors. At the commemoration of the living the priest prays Almighty God to "be mindful of all here present whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer or who offer, up to Thee this sacrifice of praise;" and, again, he says: "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty."

This may be illustrated by the history of Zachary, the father of St. John the Baptist. We are told that "when he executed the priestly function in the order of his course before God, according to the custom of the priestly office, it was his lot to offer incense, going into the Temple of the Lord; and all the multitude of the people was praying without, at the hour of incense . . . and the people were waiting for Zachary: and they wondered that he tarried so long in the temple" (St. Luke i. 8). He was offering incense within the veil, hidden from

their sight, and yet they were all taking part with him, and joining in His Sacrifice.

It is important to dwell upon this thought, because a good many people do not sufficiently realize that it is their Sacrifice which the priest is offering up, and that they have not merely to look on, but to join heartily in the great action which is done in their name. A great number of things, which might otherwise seem strange, are at once explained if we think of the Mass as the joint sacrifice offered to Almighty God by priest and people together. At the Mass the priest turns his face away from the people, and says the greater part of the prayers in secret, and, moreover, the Mass is said in a language which the congregation do not understand : this would be unintelligible, if it were only a form of united prayer, but the meaning is plain when we remember that the object of all present is to join, not in his words, but in the great action which he is doing. Again, it is very easy to understand that people may assist at Mass, and yet make use of a number of different forms of prayer : the one thing necessary is to join in the sacrifice, and that is best done if each one makes use of the kind of devotion which will best help him to unite his intentions with those of the priest.

When Zachary and all the priests of the Old Law entered into the Temple of the Lord, they were arrayed, by God's command, in their priestly vestments. This was not for the people, but because they were to offer sacrifice, and their vestments were the sign of the office in which they were engaged. So it is at the Mass. The altar, with the crucifix and the candles burning beside it, the vestments the priest wears, and the ceremonies of the Mass, are not a display to the people, but the outward mark and fitting accompaniment of a sacrifice offered to God. Again, a great number of Masses are celebrated. The priest celebrates Mass, whether a congregation of people is present or not. If the Mass were merely a form of public prayer, this would seem unnecessary and useless, but, as each Mass is a sacrifice offered up not only for those present, but "for all faithful Christians, living and dead," it can be offered profitably even when no one is present.

In England and the Western part of the Church the Mass is always said in Latin, and, with a few exceptions, in very nearly the same form; but in the East a great number of rituals or liturgies are still in use. These come down from the earliest ages, and are used both in the communion of the Catholic Church, and amongst those who, in past ages, broke off from Catholic unity. It is most interesting to see how these different rituals arose, and to observe in what different forms they put

before us the idea of the Holy Sacrifice. These forms express the faith of the Church in the most authentic and vivid way; they are not mere abstract professions of doctrine, but they are the faith put into practical and devotional language. Moreover, they are not like passages from the fathers, which are the language and expression of one man, but they are forms of prayer adopted and used by thousands. They are, perhaps, of all human things, the least liable to change, and so hand down to all ages what were the ideas and feelings of those who first used them.

It would appear that the liturgy—the prayers and forms used in celebrating Mass—were not written till about the middle of the fourth century. During the early times of persecution the Office of the Mass was handed on by tradition, but, when peace came, these traditions were put together in different forms in different parts of the Church. St. Proclus tells us that, after our Lord had gone up into heaven, the Apostles met together to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and, "having found the mystic Sacrifice of our Lord's Body a great consolation, they sang it at very great length, for this and teaching they considered preferable to anything else." The forms of prayer which they used, he adds, were afterwards abridged ; much was omitted, and it was arranged to be celebrated in a concise form.

"Of the numerous liturgies used at various times in different parts of Christendom, there are said to be three great sources or originals, of which all the rest are substantially transcripts. Those originals are the Liturgy of St. James, that of St. Mark, and the Roman Liturgy, or St. Peter's, according to the testimony of Pope Innocent I., who died in 417. The Liturgy of St. James is followed, more or less directly, by all the Oriental liturgies, whether of the Orthodox or of the schismatical and heretical Churches; that of St. Mark by the Ethiopian; that of Rome by the Ambrosian, and the liturgies of Roman Africa.

These liturgies are different in form and language, and yet they are all the same—that is, they all express the same faith and the same idea of sacrifice. They contain:

1. Prayer for the dead.

2. A narrative of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, which is almost, word for word, the same in every liturgy except the Ethiopian, and yet it is not taken from any of the Scripture accounts.

3. A prayer that God will make or change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

4. They declare that a mystery and sacrifice are celebrated, and they contain an actual sacrificial oblation.

5. The mixture of water with the wine is named in each, either in the prayers themselves, or in the rubrics.

6. The sign of the cross.

7. And probably, also, the invocation of saints, in terms more or less direct, forms a primitive portion of nearly all the liturgies.

We are familiar with all these things as they appear in the Latin Mass, which we ourselves constantly hear; but it will be useful to give some passages from the Eastern liturgies, in which these same truths are expressed in very remarkable language.

In the Syriac Liturgy, after the words of institution, come these words: "And may Thy Holy Spirit come down upon us and upon these gifts which be before us, and may He sanctify them, and make this bread the glorious Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, a heavenly body, a life-giving body, a precious body, for the expiation of faults and the remission of sins, and life everlasting to those who receive it." The liturgy of the Nestorians, which is supposed to go back to a date before the time of Nestorius—A.D. 450—says: "Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, pray for me to thine only Son, who was born of thee, that He may forgive my sins, and receive from my weak and sinful hands this sacrifice."

The Coptic Liturgy, from the fourth century, says: "Send down upon us the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that He may sanctify and change these gifts set before us into the body and blood of our salvation. And mayest Thou make this bread indeed Thy holy Body, O Lord our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, which is given for the remission of sins and life everlasting to those who partake of it. And, again, this chalice the Precious Blood of Thy New Testament, O Lord our God and Saviour, which Blood is given for the remission of sins and life everlasting to those who partake of it."

I will conclude with one other passage from the Ethiopian Liturgy: "Now, also, O Lord, celebrating the memory of Thy death and resurrection, we offer to Thee this bread and this chalice, giving thanks to Thee, that by them Thou hast made us worthy to stand before Thee, and to perform the priestly office unto Thee. We pray Thee, O Lord, and beseech Thee, that Thou send the Holy Spirit and power upon this bread and this chalice, and that He make them both the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. Amen. . . . . Hosts of angels stand before the Saviour of the world, and surround the Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: let us approach before His Presence and venerate Christ

with faith. *(Deacon)* Adore God with fear." . . . . "The holy, precious, living and true Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which is given for remission of sins and everlasting life to those who receive it with faith. Amen. . . . . I believe, I believe, I believe, from this time forth, now and for evermore. Amen. This is the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He received of the Lady of us all—the holy and pure Virgin Mary" (*Faith of Catholics.* Waterworth. Vol. II., pp. 505, 179, 188, 189, 192).

These few examples, taken at random from a great many passages, will serve to show the spirit of faith and devotion which runs through the liturgies of the Eastern Church. In all of them we have the same things put constantly before us: that the Mass is not merely a form of prayer, but that a great action is done; that the change of transubstantiation is accomplished, by which our Lord becomes present on the altar, and claims all our reverence and love; and that, on the altar, He offers Himself in sacrifice to obtain for men "the remission of sins and everlasting life."

The worship of sacrifice belongs exclusively to God, and cannot, without idolatry, be offered to any creature. We constantly hear of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the saints; and, although it is quite unnecessary to say that Mass could not possibly be offered to any being but Almighty God, it may be useful to explain why these terms are used.

The Mass is, in substance, always the same; not only is the action always the same, and the great ends for which it is offered the same, but in all the important sacrificial parts the words used are the same. Besides these great ends, however, there are certain subordinate objects and intentions which are specially alluded to in what may be called the accidental prayers of the Mass. Thus, on a feast of our Lady, besides the general ends of sacrifice, we have in view to thank God for the graces and privileges bestowed upon His Blessed Mother, and to ask her specially to join her prayers to ours in the Sacrifice we are offering. In a Mass of thanksgiving, or a Mass for the dead, it is the same; the general end and object of the Mass, and of all the sacrificial prayers offered, is that common to all Masses, but we have the secondary end of thanking God for favours received, or of asking mercy for our departed brethren.

The prayers at Mass are of two kinds—there is the Ordinary of the Mass, which never changes, or changes very little, and the moveable prayers, which vary every day. The moveable prayers can easily be found in the Missal, but the Ordinary is contained in almost all the ordinary prayer-books, and with that you can

follow the priest quite sufficiently for purposes of devotion. The moveable part consists of four selections of verses taken from the Holy Scriptures—the Introit, when the priest goes up to the altar; the Gradual, between the Epistle and Gospel; the Offertory, just before the offering of the bread and wine; and the Communion, after the priest and people have received the Blessed Sacrament. 2. Three sets of formal prayers: the Collects, the Secrets, and the Post Communions; and, 3, the Epistle and Gospel. These are selections from Holy Scripture, and have reference to the special object, or occasion of the Mass, as well as to the ends of sacrifice generally.

The Ordinary of the Mass is divided into two great parts—the preparation for the Sacrifice and the Sacrifice itself. The preparation consists of the prayers in which the priest prepares himself and the people for the great work he is going to do; he makes a humble confession at the foot of the altar, and asks pardon for his sins; he recites the selections of Holy Scripture and prayers appointed, and also generally the *Gloria*, and on some days the *Credo*, to praise God and make a profession of faith. The next preparation is to get ready the bread and wine for the Sacrifice, and formally offer them to God for the ends of Sacrifice to be consecrated, and become the Body and Blood of our Lord. The preparation concludes with the Secrets—that is, a set of prayers corresponding to the Collects, but which are said secretly.

The part of the Mass which contains the Sacrifice may be said to begin with the Preface, a solemn introduction to the Canon, or most sacred part of the Mass. It concludes with the *Sanctus*: the words, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest!" At these words the bell rings to remind us that the Canon, or most solemn part of the Mass, has begun.

The Canon contains the consecration and solemn offering to God of the Sacred Host in these words: "We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, command these things to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty." It also contains the prayer for the whole Church, communicating with, and honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints reigning with Christ, and also the commemoration of the living and of the dead.

The *Pater Noster* and the following prayers—the *Agnus Dei* and *Domine, non sum dignus*—are the special preparation for Communion, and the rest of the Mass is chiefly taken up with prayers of thanksgiving after Communion.

And, now, to conclude this short sketch of the ritual of the

Mass, we must always remember that the great object in view is to "show forth the death of the Lord," and to participate in the merits of His gracious sacrifice. We may hear Mass in many different ways, but our one prevailing thought should be that we are called to Mount Calvary to stand at the foot of the cross. Around that cross is gathered together, in spirit, the whole Christian Church: the blessed in heaven, who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, who praise and thank Him for their glory; the souls of the faithful, who look longingly to Him for their deliverance, and all poor sinners who have no hope of pardon or grace, except in that great sacrifice which He offered for their redemption.

Let us take our place amongst this multitude, that, as that Holy Sacrifice is renewed upon the altar, the fruits of the Precious Blood may be poured into our souls.

SERMON LXXXII.

The Last Sacraments.

"It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own power" (Acts i. 7).

THESE are the words in which our Lord replied to His Apostles, when they asked him about the future. The great and terrible day of God, when this world and all its works are to be tried, are the moments which the Father has put in His own power; so, with regard to the fate of each one in particular, that judgment, which is all in all to each individual soul, is God's secret: when, and where, and how the judgment is to come upon us is known to Him only. I propose, to-day, to speak of the sacraments by which we have to prepare for our last end, or, as they are commonly called, the "Last Sacraments."

These sacraments are Penance, the Holy Viaticum, and Extreme Unction, and, after these, comes the last blessing and plenary indulgence, which the Church grants to the dying. Extreme Unction is the special sacrament appointed by our Lord to help us in the time of sickness and danger of death. It was foreshadowed when Jesus sent out His Apostles to preach and heal the sick. "And, going forth, they preached that men should do penance. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (St. Mark vi. 12).

The Catechism tells us that "the sacrament of Extreme Unction is the anointing of the sick with holy oil, accompanied with prayer." Of this sacrament St. James speaks when he says: "Is any one sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (St. James v. 14).

A special holy oil is blessed for this purpose on Maundy Thursday every year. Just before the *Pater Noster* the Bishop leaves the altar to consecrate the olive oil, which is prepared for the "oil of the sick," that "it may be used as a spiritual unction to strengthen the temple of the Living God." He blesses the oil with this prayer: "Send forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord,

Thy Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, from heaven upon this fatness of the olive which Thou has deigned to produce from the green tree, for the refreshment of mind and body, that, by Thy holy blessing, it may be, to every one anointed with this oil of heavenly medicine, a protection of body and soul, to drive away all pains, all infirmities, and all sickness of mind and body."

The holy anointing is intended for those who are in danger of death by sickness, and cannot be given in any other case, and the effect of this sacrament is that "it comforts and strengthens the soul in danger of death by sickness ; it also remits sin, and even restores health when God sees it to be expedient."

Besides Extreme Unction, a Christian on his death-bed is bound to receive the Holy Eucharist as *Viaticum*, and will naturally prepare himself by the sacrament of Penance. It is a matter of strict obligation to receive the Holy Eucharist when in danger of death, since it is the one special preparation appointed by our Lord. Sometimes the illness may be of such a kind that it is impossible for the sick man to receive Communion without danger of irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament, and then he is excused : but, in ordinary cases, every one is bound, on pain of mortal sin, to receive the Holy Viaticum.

These two sacraments—Penance and the Holy Eucharist—have been our companions through life, but they receive a special character of solemnity when we receive them in our last sickness. Oh, who can tell how awful a thing it will be to make the last earthly confession of one's sins, and to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord for the last time in this life ! It is the will of God that our earthly trial should, as it were, be concentrated in those last few hours. The rest of our lives are specially important to us—according to the ordinary dispositions of God's Providence—as the means to a good death ; but the one great thing which Almighty God requires of us is to be found ready and in a state of grace when the hour of death comes. All that we may have done during life will be of no avail, unless, by God's help, we die in a state of grace.

" Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like men who wait for their Lord when He shall return from the wedding : that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching " (St. Luke xii. 35). The one thing specially asked of you, my brethren, is to be " found watching." It was the condition made with you when you were baptised. The priest put a light into your hand

with the words: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame; keep the commandments of God, that, when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet Him in the company of all the saints in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever." Eternal life was to depend upon being ready when the Lord should come. Our Blessed Saviour puts this before us most strongly in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, to which these words allude: the foolish virgins had allowed their lamps to be extinguished, and, "whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He, answering, said, Amen I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour" (St. Matt. xxv. 10).

We find the same thing in the parable of the marriage feast. There, too, there is but *one* question, "How came you in here not having on the wedding garment?" In that one question everything else was contained. So it is with our eternal salvation; the one thing necessary is to be found the friend of God, and clothed in the garment of divine grace, when our souls go forth from this world.

And how can we secure this? What shall we be able to do for ourselves in that hour? Our Lord wept over Jerusalem and said, "If thou also had known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of the visitation" (St. Luke xix. 42).

Do not these words terribly describe what will be the condition of a Christian soul, if left to his own resources at the hour of death? The enemy has encompassed him around, and there is no escape; all his strength is overcome, and his powers have failed; his mind is wandering and thoughts astray; his senses disturbed, and his will appears to have no longer the mastery Without there is desolation, and within rebellion, and all the powers of body and soul are prostrated at the moment they are most needed. "They shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are within thee."

It is, therefore, our duty to prepare, as far as we can, "in this our day," against that hour, and to provide beforehand the things

that are to our peace. The Lord has provided special means of grace against that time—sacraments which do not depend for their effect on what we are able to do for ourselves, but give grace by the direct ordinance of Christ.

"Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour" (St. Matt. xxv. 13). The most appalling part of that terrible day is the darkness that surrounds it. We know not the day nor the hour; all that we do know is, to use the words of David, that there "is but one step between me and death." It is not necessary to talk of sudden deaths—of those sudden and unusual calls which we so often see around us—because, as it ordinarily comes, death is very sudden, and gives us very little warning. Take the usual death of men, and you will find that the enemy is upon us very suddenly, and gives little time for preparation. We all suppose that the last illness will be something very solemn, and very unlike anything else, which will at once give us notice of what is to come; but how will it really be? See how death comes upon other people. A man takes a chill, or a little fever and shivering, something like what he has had twenty times before: he is obliged to stay away from his work and lie up; he is languid, and indisposed to thought and exertion. Oh, it is nothing, and will pass off in a few days. And so the time goes on, in drowsiness and discomfort, or in sharp suffering, perhaps in fretfulness and neglect of God; he keeps on day after day, expecting to be better shortly, and about again—perhaps he carefully shuts his eyes to the anxiety which those around him are beginning to display—to the frequent visits and anxious looks of his friends—till at last it comes home to him that he must die. The sentence has gone forth, and the hours are few, and at last he sees and knows it: he reads the sentence in the eyes of those around, and feels it in himself—he must die.

Is this all the preparation we are to have?—a few days of pain, and weariness, and distraction of mind, and a few hours only, it may be, in which we realize that we have to prepare ourselves for the judgment that is to come! This is the way in which most people die, and it will probably be so with us whenever death does come—it will always seem to be sudden, and we shall feel with King Ezechias, "My generation is at an end, and is rolled away from me as a shepherd's tent. My life is cut off as by a weaver; whilst I was yet beginning, he cut me off." (Is. xxxviii. 12).

But what, my dear brethren, is the object of dwelling upon death, and thinking how, and when it will steal upon us? It is not to terrify us, but to remind us that the great thing we have

to do as Christians is to prepare to die well. The Apostle tells us that we are "not to mourn like those who have no hope;" and so we must not allow ourselves to fear as those who have nothing to hope for. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;" but this judgment is to be to us, as we hope in God's mercy, the beginning of everlasting life. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (St. John xii. 24).

"Expect the Lord and do manfully, and let thy heart take courage and wait for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 14). "Being confident of this very thing, that He begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). And how are we to prepare? It is plain that, in one sense, there is no preparation for a good death, except a good life. If, for instance, any one were to think that he had found out some good plan for obtaining a happy death, whereas he did not mean to lead a virtuous life, it is certain that he would be deceiving himself. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7).

We need, however, special preparation. If you were going before an earthly tribunal—to be examined before an earthly magistrate—you would not fail to rehearse and prepare yourself, to set your accounts in order, and to see that there was nothing which could be brought forward against you to your shame. So, too, should men prepare themselves for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, come when it may. "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest, perhaps, thy adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison" (St. Matt. v. 25).

The chief thing which we can do to obtain the blessing of a happy end is to pray for it. God alone can give it to us, and we may have confidence that He will grant it to earnest prayer. "I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God; my lot is in Thy hands" (Ps. xxx. 15). Nothing that we can do will ever deserve the grace of final perseverance, and a good death; it must be by the free gift of God that we persevere to the end and save our souls, and His providence alone can make "all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28).

Many forms of prayer for a happy death are approved by the Church, and there is one which is constantly in our mouths:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." It is impossible to say this devoutly without thinking of that last hour, and begging for a happy death by the very fact that we ask our Lady's intercession at that awful moment. It would be well for us all, my dear brethren, if we made this prayer with our hearts, as well as with our lips, every time we said the "Hail Mary."

The particular thing for which we should pray at that hour is that we may have the opportunity of receiving the last sacraments, and the grace to receive them devoutly. When we think of the frailty and imperfection of human nature, and the constant temptations to which we are exposed, we cannot but feel how much we shall need some special cleansing and sanctification before entering into the presence of our Judge; and what can be better than those sacraments which our Lord has established in His Church for this very purpose?

It may, indeed, be in the designs of God's providence that we should be called away without any such preparation, and without any of that sacramental grace which He has provided for the dying. In that case we need not fear, since He can supply all our spiritual necessities in His own way, if only we have lived up to the graces we have received; but, at least, let us not be deprived of the sacraments because we undervalued them, or did not pray for them, or neglected to make use of them when it was in our power.

We will now consider what are the dispositions with which we ought to receive the last sacraments, and what effects they ought to produce in our souls. Our first resolve and determination ought to be to receive these sacraments in good time. They are meant to help us in danger of death, *not* when all hope of recovery is past. The very idea of Extreme Unction, in particular, is that it should be a spiritual remedy for disease of body as well as of soul: "The Lord shall raise him up." The prayers during the administration of the sacrament are full of petitions for the restoration of bodily health, as well as spiritual blessings, and breathe nothing but cheerful hope for the sick man. "Cure, we beseech Thee, O Lord our Redeemer, the infirmities of this sick man, heal his wounds, and forgive his sins; drive away from him all sorrows of mind and body, and mercifully give complete soundness, both within and without, that, being restored by the aid of Thy mercy, he may again be made fit for his former duties." "At the invocation of Thy holy name be Thou mercifully at hand to free Thy servant from his sickness, and to bestow health upon him; to raise him up with Thy right hand, strengthen him with Thy power, and shield him with Thy might,

and restore him to Thy holy Church with all the prosperity he can desire."

It constantly happens, in fact, that the sick, after receiving Extreme Unction, recover their health in a way which seems like an answer to prayer, as if Almighty God had been pleased to make this the turning-point of their illness. If you delay receiving the sacraments till you are almost at the point of death, you may, perhaps, lose the temporal help which God designed for you, and you certainly run the risk of losing the greater part of the spiritual blessings which the sacrament was meant to give.

You want the grace of God whilst your mind is still active and exposed to temptation, whilst the last labour of your salvation is still going on, and the "good fight" has still to be fought, and not when all is nearly over, and the lethargy of death is upon you.

The same considerations apply even more forcibly to confession and Communion: you want to receive them whilst you have your reason about you, and are able to prepare for them with all that devotion with which they should be received for the last time. It is an unworthy kind of cowardice which makes Christians delay; they are afraid to acknowledge, even to themselves, that they are in danger of death, and so run the risk of dying unprepared, because they dare not look their last end in the face.

If this is a culpable weakness on the part of those who are ill, it is a still more serious neglect on the part of those who have the care of their brethren in sickness. It is not an uncommon thing to find husbands and wives and children who will run the risk of allowing their relatives and friends to die without the sacraments, because they are too weak and selfish to say a word of the danger; and they think themselves loving and dutiful friends, even whilst doing the worst injury that one human being can inflict on another!

On these occasions people flatter themselves that they are actuated by kindness to their friends and a desire to keep them from a painful shock, whereas, in reality, it is mere selfishness. They do not like to look forward to painful things, or speak of them. In all probability the sick man has a very good idea of the real state of the case, and will not be made any worse by being told of his danger in plain terms.

The first thing is to make your confession. What a confession it would be if you could realize that perhaps your next would be made standing face to face with your Eternal Judge! "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (St. James v. 9). The time

for a merciful judgment and a gentle sentence is fast slipping away. Oh, for the grace to make the best use of it!

In that confession, perhaps, many disguises will have to be thrown aside, and we shall see things in truer lights, and call them by plainer names than we do now. We shall then earnestly desire to make up for the deficiencies of all past confessions; for our want of real sincerity and humility in acknowledging our sins, and perhaps want of sufficient purpose of amendment. How awful will the moment be when the iniquity of his life, which seems now to be concentrated into one brief period, shall come before the Christian soul; when there is no time to amend, and but a few moments to repent! Then, indeed, we shall see how completely we have to rely on God's infinite mercy and on the Precious Blood of Jesus which is offered to us in the sacraments—then we shall see how little it is that we can do, and how much we must leave to Him.

But we can do a great deal now in preparation for that day, if we will. If we made every confession as we should like to make that last one, it would be, comparatively, an easy and joyful matter. If we took care each time to leave nothing behind which could be a pain and grief to us at that moment, and were resolved always to be straightforward with ourselves and our confessor, and to leave no corner unexplored and no sin unrepented, we should have little to trouble us. The habits of careless self-examination, imperfect explanation, and, above all, of insincere purpose of amendment—these are the things which will make our last confession difficult and painful. Let it be our constant prayer, my dear brethren, that God will enable us to receive that last absolution, so as to wash away every stain from our baptismal robe—the stains of youth and passion, the stains of middle life and old age—so that we may carry it "unspotted before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now comes the Viaticum, the most touching of all sacraments. Many a time you have knelt at the altar of God to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, but now He comes to visit you, and says, in a double sense, "This day must I abide in thy house." The Lord Himself has come to comfort you in your sickness. In the sick man's room an altar is erected, and his friends should take pains that everything is arranged with becoming propriety. There should be a crucifix and candles and holy water, and water for the purification after Communion (it is best to provide a bottle of fresh water and a small tumbler), and, if possible, something should be prepared in the way of flowers and ornament. It is a favourite devotion of many pious people to go before and prepare the houses of the poor when the

Viaticum is to be administered. It is only decent that some preparation should be made for our Lord, and such externals generally have their effect on the feelings and devotion of all around.

"Peace be to this house and to all who dwell therein." This is the salutation with which the priest greets you, on our Lord's part, as he enters the room. Jesus brought peace on earth when He came at Bethlehem, and, once more, peace when He rose from the dead, and now He comes at the moment when we most need it to bring us the last earthly peace—that peace which the world cannot give. Let us endeavour to be the "sons of peace."

Then comes the *Confiteor* as usual, with the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world." Now, perhaps for the last time, Jesus presents Himself to the sick man under the sacramental veil. He has been to him the manna in the desert, and has accompanied him to the very borders of the promised land, and now comes to be his Viaticum, to see him safe on his way. The *next* time He comes, the veil will be drawn aside, and the Creator and the creature will meet face to face. "Receive, brother, the Viaticum of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep thee safe from the deadly foe, and lead thee into life everlasting." These are the words with which the sick man receives his last Communion.

It must not be imagined, however, that the Blessed Sacrament can only be received once, and therefore is to be received only when death is approaching. It may be received as often as necessary, according to the duration of the illness. As soon as there is *danger* the rule about fasting ceases to bind, and we should be anxious to receive our Lord as soon as may be, so that we may have the full benefit of His Sacred Presence in time of peril.

The essence of the sacrament of Extreme Unction is the anointing of the organs of sense with the holy oil, accompanied by prayer. The priest makes the sign of the cross on the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the closed lips, on the palms of the hands, and the upper part of the feet, and with each anointing he says the appropriate prayer for the sense. "By this holy anointing and His own most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast sinned "by thy sight," or, "by thy hearing."

The senses are the windows, as it were, of the soul, by which all communication with the outer world is held, and, as such, almost every sin we can commit is connected with their use. The special grace of Extreme Unction is to wash away the remains of sin—the stain which every sin seems to leave

behind it, which is so seldom completely effaced in this life. It has, moreover, the special office of giving strength and comfort to the soul in the hour when they are most needed. The oil, which is its external sign, is the symbol of strength, as well as of comfort and gladness, and may well represent the sacramental grace which our Lord has prepared for the sick.

The sacrament of Extreme Unction can only be given once in each sickness, and it may be given even to those who have lost the use of their senses, and, consequently, are unable to make a confession, or receive the Holy Eucharist.

When, at last, the hour of death is at hand, there is one more gift which the Church has in store for her children. It is the "last blessing," or the plenary indulgence, granted to the dying. "By the passion and death of Thy only-begotten Son, mercifully grant him pardon and the remission of all his offences, that his soul, at the hour of its going forth, may find Thee a propitiated Judge, and, being washed from all stain in the Blood of Thy Son, may deserve to pass to life eternal."

Let us conclude with the Church's parting words to her dying children: "Go forth, O Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee. . . . . May thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion. Through Christ our Lord!"

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